

DANIEL

FINDING COURAGE IN A CULTURE OF COMPROMISE

OPEN IN PRAYER

Holy Spirit thank you for being the voice of God on the earth. Thank you for leading us into all truth, reminding us of what Jesus said and how Jesus lived. Father, thank You that lead us not into temptation but instead You DELIVER us from evil. For YOURS is the Kingdom and the Glory and THE POWER forever, amen.

My heart is just heavy lately with the culture that were in in the increasing demands and in my opinion I just see the end days unfolding in front of our eyes.

I want to warn you - up front - that something I will say today WILL offend you.

You've been warned.

I don't say that out of arrogance as I am NOT that preacher that offends for the sake of offending. We've all seen those type and that's simply not me. I'm not trying to look strong or impress you. I'm not trying to look like "a rebel"

Today's message isn't click bait.

Today's message is however, a word from the Lord for YOU, for right NOW.

So today we're talking about how do we find courage in the midst of a culture that is demanding that you go along to get along and that you compromise?
how do we find courage to stick to our convictions and yet still be kind and respectful how do I apply the words of Jesus on the sermon on the mount to be meek, to be humble but also the words of Jesus to go into all the world and to tell people about him to make disciples to live up to

Jesus broke so long and he touch the leper

Jesus broke the wall and ate the wheat on the Sabbath with his disciples

Jesus broke the law when he healed on the Sabbath and then instructed the man to break the law at the pool Bethesda telling him to pick up his mat and leave that place Jesus absolutely knew that moving your possessions from one place to the next was breaking the law so why would Jesus advocate breaking the law

and please as you hear the sermon today do not misquote me or take a soundbite because right now we live in a soundbite culture that takes one or two sentences out of context in you then tries to cancel someone based on one quote taken out of context - so please be wise today and don't do that on the heels of the sermon I respectfully ask

I know I probably will have that happen though - because in the wise words of my father who once said in a staff meeting **"If you want to follow Jesus example, you have to be willing to be misunderstood."**

I am not advocating that you go break the law

but I am advocating that you find your courage again as a Christian and you set some moral boundaries some values defined by your identity as a child of God that absolutely will not change no matter what happens in the culture around you

We're living in a very chaotic culture right now I'm I'm sure nobody else to tell you that i've never seen so much bullying in my entire life

I personally believe it's like a Jezebel Spirit that Satan is released on earth Jezebel Spirit the lies and causes division and manipulation to get its way

and if you're not careful, do you want discernment and you will simply just go along with whatever is demanded of you because after all you want to be respectful

Daniels Story

Daniel story is one of bravery in Babylon. When it comes to integrity, no one in the Bible quite stands out to me like Daniel does. King Nebuchadnezzar took the Israelites into captivity when they were exiled and taken into Babylon in 605 B.C. The King, like many before him was fuming with a ruthless greed to conquer all he could for his own fame and fortune. Of all that were taken, Daniel stood apart from the rest because of his wisdom, prophetic gifting and even good looks. His unique identity gave him a special chance to serve in the palace, the Bible tells us.

While Daniel was true to his Jewish convictions, he served a tyrant! Daniel 2:37 tells us that King N was given all authority over all mankind. He was the first ruler of a one world government. Read it for yourself.

This is the same king who threw Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the fiery furnace when they refused to worship him. He was full of pride and arrogance and yet God used Daniel to prophesy truth about a dream the king had. God then fulfilled Daniel's prophecy and brought the king to a place of humility and desperate need for God.

DANIEL FOUND COURAGE IN THE MIDST OF COMPROMISE FROM A PLACE OF PRAYER

Daniel remained faithful to God and served God wholeheartedly in a broken kingdom. Daniel held on the promises of God and was faithful to serve Him with his prophetic gifting wherever God had placed him.

Babylon had fallen to the Persians in 539 B.C. Daniel 5:31 tells us that "Darius received the kingdom" and many have come to believe that text to imply a great king such as Cyrus may have given it to him, possibly unexpectedly in the wake of Nechuchadnezzar's death. Other historical records tell us that Darius separated the region into 120 sections and then placed 3 administrators over those sections, one of whom was Daniel. This separation is similar to what we have in America with towns and cities making it easier for the people to be represented by local government and truly governed.

In Daniel, chapter five, we learn that Daniel interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar's father. Then Daniel was faithful and was courageous in declaring God's message to him. He had learned nothing about the demise of his father's pride. Daniel confronted the king's sin and pride and that very night the king was killed just as Daniel predicted when prophesying.

Before he was killed, the King had given Daniel a purple, royal robe and a gold chain necklace and placed him as the third in command over the entire land. Remember, Daniel was anointed to serve. Daniel was anointed and appointed by God to serve in this prophetic gifting in that time in history. Daniel was chosen by the king because of his looks and intellect to serve in the King's palace. But long before the Babylonian King noticed it, Daniel noticed this small flame within his heart, a gift, a treasure within that seemed to be uniquely his? Do you know what your treasure within is? Do you know what your promise is? Seek God about it! It may not be good looks, but there is something uniquely special about you!

Don't despise your current season, no matter how difficult it is! God knows why He has you where He has you. God has plans and promises for you, people you are to impact and assignments for you to accomplish.

Like Pastor Joseph Gordon shared last week when he quoted Gen 50 and the story of Joseph "**What satan meant to destroy me, God will use for the saving of many lives!**" Your current circumstance may look awful! BUT ...

**WHY? WHY HAVE THE PAIN - THE CAPTIVITY OF THESE HEBREW CHILDREN?
God can see things that we can't see.**

If we were writing this story, we would've set Daniel free. We're not God and God didn't do that. We see that Daniel doesn't want to be taken captive. Daniel doesn't want to be held captive... for years. Daniel faced a harsh reality. He was called upon to use his God-given gifts to serve unjust, godless kings. Yet somehow, Daniel's faith remains intact. Sometimes we think a bad situation we're in can't be God's will or that God simply isn't answering our prayers or even hearing us pray. I fear that some Christians are waiting on God to get them *out* of a situation that God has allowed them to be *in* so they can turn hearts toward Him *in* that situation. More than you ask God to remove you *from* a situation, ask God to help you be faithful in it first.

Daniel chapter six tells us more of what we need to know about Daniel. In light of the king being murdered, King Darius became the new King. Daniel was 62 years old and was now serving his third King. Many years had gone by. Decades had past since he was a young man stolen from his home. Undoubtedly there were times when his knees would give way or a pain in his back would cause him to sit and think back fifty plus years ago when he was another person in another place, a Jewish boy, home with his family. Despite knowing who he really was, he didn't become cynical. He remained humble and faithful to God to be used in his gifts. He fulfilled the promise of God on his life.

Daniel was given a prophetic gift. He could interpret the meaning of dreams. This gift led him all the way to the royal palace! At the time of interpreting the King's dreams, his conclusions would've seemed unthinkable! He describes the kingdoms of the present world such as Egypt and Babylon toppling and even being split into four smaller kingdoms. It was ludicrous at the time because these kingdoms and their military might were vast! Daniel's gift of prophecy allowed him to see these current super-powers in their future, crumbling to pieces.

STORY HERE
Daniel 1-4 ...

The Stone The Builders Rejected

The picture of the stone is later used by the Apostle Paul to describe Jesus, the God-man who would come and establish an eternal Kingdom, one to far outlast them all. See Ephesians 2:20.

He is the "stone the builders rejected" yet He is the cornerstone, the foundation, the rock on which the entire Kingdom of God is eternally built. Jesus was given the throne of David which started out small, just as described in Daniel's interpretation, yet would last forevermore. Daniel 7 also speaks of this revelation that Jesus, being the Son of Man, would rule and reign forever. Jesus even referenced Himself as the Son of Man when standing in front of Pilot, alluding to Daniel's prophecy saying "... and you will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven..." He was in no doubt referencing Daniel's vision of the "Son of Man." Revelation 11:15 tells us that "The kingdoms of the world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah and He will reign forever and ever!"

This must be one of the reasons why there's so much power in the songs we sing about Christ's eternal reign. On a Christmas album I released, I wrote a song called Glory To God In The Highest and in the bridge we shout "He'll reign forever and ever! His love will never end! He'll reign forever and ever! His power, it knows no end!" Every time we declare that truth with a group of believers, something happens! There's an eternal truth, a chorus centuries old that our voices join that electrifies the room! It's hard to describe but whether there's twenty people in the room or two thousand, it seems that when we sing of Jesus' eternal reign, we are joining

all of Heaven! In a way, we are joining all of History, all of creation, all the angels and even men like Daniel who are standing in the courts of Heaven now declaring this truth of Christ's eternal reign!

Daniel knew he had a gift. We can imagine that certain political things would take place around him growing up and we can assume that Father God had already revealed those things to young Daniel in the secret place of prayer.

How will you learn what will happen in the future on a global scale? Reading your Bible. How will you learn what to do when you're bullied in the future and confused about what to do? Prayer. Daily prayer time. Follow Daniel's example. To find courage in a culture of compromise only comes through daily prayer and Bible study.

Daniel realized his spiritual gift in the secret place of prayer. It was there that He discovered His unique ability given to Him by God. I would argue that only in the secret place of your prayer life will you discover exactly what God wants you to do with your life - the gifts He's given you and how they're to be used. **If you don't appoint time to get alone in prayer then you could miss your appointed time to be used by God.**

I wonder how many men and women who are Christians have MISSED their assignment - their opportunity for impact at their workplace or neighborhood because they mistakenly think that Christianity is just going to church on Sunday and Monday through Saturday, they go along to get along.

Maybe that's you! Maybe you feel God's Spirit even now speaking to your heart, calling you forward, asking you to trust Him!

There are some fears I'd like to address today. Maybe one of them will resonate with you more than another. All of these have the potential to STOP you from moving forward in faith.

4 Fears

Fear of going first

Fear of the unknown

Fear of being rejected

Fear of wasted effort

Where do you find the courage to push past these fears and move forward in faith?

Finding courage in a culture of compromise comes from a commitment to prayer.

What do we do in the midst of trials?

1 Peter 1:3-8

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith

—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (1 Pe 1:3–9). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

James 1:2-12

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. ⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

⁶ But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. ⁷ For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; ⁸ he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. ⁹ Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation,

¹⁰ and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹ For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. ¹² Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.

We learn here that a double-minded man can expect to receive nothing from the Lord. Someone who demands something of you they're unwilling to do themselves is double-minded. Someone who insists you do something because everyone is doing it is double-minded and doesn't know his or her identity as first being GOD'S CHILD.

YOUR CALLING will come with some conflict.

Fulfilling the promise of God on your life, walking in obedience the assignments of heaven on your life will come with a price tag. Ask any man of God or woman of God who has contended for their faith and lived in ministry or in a normal career or in business yet began something new or stepped out in faith to do something for God and with God and you ask them - has it been hard? Has there been times of opposition? YES

JESUS IS KING AND LORD OF ALL - SUPREME OVER EVERY RULER

Dan was a guy with dreams for his future just like you and me. Dan had faults just like you and me. Dan faced a harsh reality though unlike you and I will ever experience. Can you imagine being abducted, removed from everything you know to be normal?

It breaks my heart when I see a Christian leader face something painful then give up on their faith in God all together.

We need a ...

PROPER PERSPECTIVE
WORSHIP DESPITE THE PAIN

In the book of Daniel, we see a reoccurring theme of God's sovereignty best summarized in **Daniel 2:20 - 23.**

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. ²¹ He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; ²² he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. ²³ To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter."

The whole point of the book of Daniel is to teach us that God is supreme over all rulers and kings and authority. One day EVERY KNEE will BOW to HIM.

Your talent comes from the Lord so be thankful for it. Your position of leadership came from the Lord, so be thankful to the Lord for it. Your abilities were given to you by God as gifts meant to empower you to lead well and serve people best. Don't forget these basic elements of leadership. The person or leader who forgets this will succumb to pride and "pride comes before a fall" as Scripture tells us. Daniel knew that his abilities came from the Lord. He kept the proper perspective - a humble view of himself and a glorified view of God. This must remain at the core of every Christian leader. When you forget where your talents and opportunities come from, you are closest to failing the next phase in the process of a leader, the character tests.

DANIEL FOUND COURAGE TO KEEP HIS IDENTITY BY DAILY TALKING TO GOD.

Dan's character was tested on more than one occasion and yours will be too. Somehow Dan, held on. He didn't give in to what was "culturally relevant" or "cool" nor did he compromise his integrity. When given the chance, he knew what he believed and stood by it. Do you know what you believe and why you believe it?

Dr Michael Brown often says "If you don't know what you would die for then you don't know why you're living." Would you risk your life for your confession of knowing Jesus Christ? Many around the world do this every single day. Here in America, our faith is tested but not to the extent that it is in some places of the world where faith in Christ immediately puts you in a hostile environment.

Dan's character was tested when he was asked to give the interpretation for the king's awful dream. Notice in the passage below, he could've said "I can interpret it for you." He didn't though.

Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" ²⁷ Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. (Da 2:26-28)

Daniel didn't give himself the praise when given the chance.

Too many Christians and Christian leaders will grandstand and boast of their accomplishments in an effort to impress the others around them.

Why? Why do we see this in modern Christianity? Have we learned nothing from 2,000 years of following Jesus? Have we learned nothing from the disciples vying for position and fame asking who will sit next to Jesus at His right hand? Jesus' reply says it all "Be thankful you're even gonna make it!"

You must not allow pride of sin to rule in your heart and demand your way and your praise. Obedience to God and humility before men is our goal as a Christian leader. If you want to finish the process of a leader, if you want to become who God wants you to become and reach the potential of your promise, then remember this: Your legacy doesn't matter. It's not about your legacy. It's about God's. Any great Christian leader didn't want to be great. Daniel didn't say "I can" he said "God can." We see this similar change of tone in the life of Joseph. Joseph "I can't but God can" and this should become our confession as we endure the process of a leader.

Often your character tests are simple, subtle moments where the Holy Spirit will cause you to say "we" instead of "I." Your character tests are also moments when the Holy Spirit tells you to ask questions then be quiet long enough to hear their response. A leader who is allowing the Holy Spirit to build his or her character will begin asking questions like "What is God teaching you lately? He's been teaching me about ..." "How can we celebrate _____ who is doing such a good job lately?" "I've never seen it that way before; can you explain more of what you mean?" "What is one of the most memorable times you've had with the Lord and what did He teach you?" "What can I do as your leader to make your job more enjoyable?" When you begin to ask questions like this, your character is being formed into the image of Jesus and away from the image of you. When your team hears questions like these, they'll know that you're truly there to serve them and not the other way around. Undoubtedly, there will be times when God asks you to keep your head up because the road is getting long. Next up in the process? Endurance.

So Daniel tells the King the interpretation of his dream but FIRST TELLS HIM THE DETAILS OF HIS DREAM UNDERSTAND - the LEADERS AND PHILOSOPHERS OF THE DAY HAD COME TO AND END OF THEMSELVES THAT WILL HAPPEN SOON IN OUR CULTURE and it's beginning to happen already. I've never seen so much mis-trust in our leaders in govt than we seen now.

GOD REIGNS SUPREME

Daniel GIVES THE DREAM DANIEL 3 (read it)

We know that this stature represents the four global powers that crumbled

"You oh king are the head of gold" Babylon

Medo-Persian is silver chest

Alexander The Great is the third global super-power /one world govt. Greece took over city after city till they became the global force to be reckoned with.

Fun fact - did you know that Alexander the Great was read the prophecies of Daniel and was so impressed that he refused to touch Israel and Jerusalem! We know that he felt the Spirit of God in that moment - that's what caused him to leave Jerusalem alone!

Rome is the fourth empire. Rome was like iron mixed with clay - it grew to have unrest and civil war. What happened when Rome was the global super-power? Jesus! Christmas!

THE LITTLE STONE that was born to a virgin named Mary! He grew and became a mountain that filled the whole earth!
The mountain. Christ Jesus. Sent from heaven - Crashed into this earth

The kingdom of man will bricks as **NOTHING** thus is **WHY YOU CAN HAVE COURAGE**
It was the **STONE JESUS** that was cast from heaven down to topple the worlds powers.
Bringing them to nothing
Jesus was the *stone not cut by human hands but by God*
The stone became a mountain that full the whole earth!
Jesus and his rule fills the whole earth!

In the words of John The Baptist, "He must increase and I must decrease." Until this is your belief, you have yet to grasp what being a Christian is all about. We are not building our kingdom. We are building His! Building the Kingdom of JESUS is what this life is all about!

Isn't it amazing that Daniel was a young man when he was taken into captivity and yet he served three kings who were ruthless and prideful. Daniel's integrity stood in stark contrast to the leaders he served. Despite their religious differences, each king could sense the anointing of God's Spirit upon Daniel. Isn't it amazing that even "the world" could sense "the spirit of wisdom" within him!

In Daniel, chapters five and six, we learn that King Darius was 62 years old when he was crowned king. In just a few short sentences we hear about the the fall of the Babylonian empire and the start of the Medo-Persian empire. The date was the sixteenth of the month Tishri, which most scholars agree would have been October 12, 539 b.c.

We learn from the life and story of Daniel that kings come and go but the Kingdom of God reigns supreme.

What's your goal?

If your goal is to build your own kingdom and fame, you'll arrive at the mountain-top of your success only to find out that you're alone. You'll live eternity in regret for God's Kingdom is all that matters, all that lasts and all worth living for. In the words of Daniel...

⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and it's interpretation sure." (Da 2:44-45)

Jesus said it like this ...

"Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Mt. 5:5

"Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness all these things will be given to you as well." Mt. 6:33 This proposes we don't prioritize what we want over what God wants.

One of my favorite chapters in the Bible is Romans 8. There's so much truth about being in the family of God given in this passage!

Romans 8:14-17 "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as

sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and if children, heirs and co-heirs with Christ!"

The culture around you will continue to pressure you to compromise. You can't give in. You can't back down. You must find the courage you need from prayer - your alone time with God, just like Daniel did.

One of the things that drove Jesus crazy was people judging each other based on something on the outside.

Woman at the well... "Some say *this* temple is the only one we can worship from and others say that is the only righteous temple..."

Pharisees... "You can't go near that leper or touch him! It's against the law!" Jesus walks up and touches him.

Pharisees... You can't move your mat on the sabbath!" Jesus "You are healed. Pick up your mat and leave!"

Pharisees... "It's against the law to eat that grain on the sabbath." Jesus "David ate the bread of presence when the priest offered it to him - him and his men..." then claims "I am LORD of the sabbath"

There is a lordship of love, a kingdom law, that will always supersede a man-made law. IF you know your IDENTITY, you'll be able to discern the difference.

God is the only one who actually knows the hearts of people.

Romans 14:4,10 "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand. But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God."

We as Christians, brothers and sisters in Christ, must learn to harness our emotions and tongues regarding how someone treats the covid 19 restrictions / mandates. I don't think we can judge anyone's heart based on scripture. Honestly, I don't think we can even know all that's in our own heart! That's why we should humbly bite our tongue and let each Christian appropriate each new law or mandate according to their faith.

James 1:26 "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless."

1 Cor. 4:4-5 "For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the

things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God."

2 Co 5:11-21

¹¹ Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. ¹² We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer **those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.** ¹³ For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; ¹⁵ and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

¹⁶ From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus is the judge and we must not be quick to point out what another believer is doing wrong, especially if it's simply something "on the outside" and not a matter of "the heart" see verse 12 above.

What continually got the pharisees in trouble was a judgment of what one was doing on the outside - washing or not washing their hands - diet (eating something known as defiled by Jewish law) - healing someone on the Sabbath because no "work" was to be done on the Sabbath! Crazy!

If Jesus were around today, He might say something like "It's not what covers the mouth that makes a man clean but rather what comes out of his mouth for out of the heart, the mouth speaks."

What About Romans 13?

Romans 13 does tell us to submit to all leaders bc even govt leaders are placed there by God. But this is tricky now because half our leaders are conflicted with one another on these issues. Our own president didn't demand masks while our governor of Ohio did. President is over the Governor. Our governor now has lifted the mask mandate but our local school district has put it back in place. What we have to remember is that Romans 13 not only applies to Govt authority but also Spiritual Authority. God puts pastors, teachers, evangelists, prophets and apostles in place according to Eph 4 to

help guide us in difficult times. Pastors and Spiritual leaders need respected just as much or more as local or federal govt leaders. If we don't believe that then we need to re-evaluate whether we believe in this whole thing about the Kingdom of God being over every other kingdom. We need to go to prayer and ask God what HE is saying to us. Any pastor or spiritual leader that tries to control you likely isn't hearing from the Spirit for *where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom!* Jesus often dealt with religious leaders who wanted inhibitors on people and their expression of worship - who was allowed and who wasn't - who was a leper and who wasn't - who was "clean" and who wasn't. Jesus broke all the rules at times to minister to someone the culture deemed unworthy and outcast. Are we doing the same? We need to think about that.

SONSHIP NOT SUCCESS

DANIEL & JESUS

Daniel like many of our heroes in this book point to who Jesus is. Like Daniel, Jesus was unjustly accused and treated like a criminal. Yet He endured the persecution and accusations and even criminal conviction in prison. Like Jesus, Daniel was thrown into prison on false charges. Like Jesus, Daniel was protected supernaturally. Daniel was thrown into a pit and yet rose in victory. Jesus was put in a tomb yet He rose to victory being raised to life by the Holy Spirit! When God shut the mouths of the lions, we see that God delivered him from death! God delivered His Son Jesus from the grip of death when on the third day He rose to new life and took on His heavenly body! Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we too have been promised to be delivered from death and God always makes good on His promises!

In the Kingdom of God, success isn't prominence or the accumulation of wealth or fame. Success in this life is obedience to Father God. It's sacrifice of one's comfort and convenience for the sake of keeping your integrity and standing by what you believe. It's sacrifice of one's personal agenda so that the glory of God may be revealed and sometimes that includes persecution and personal pain. Daniel was in the RIGHT place at the RIGHT time even though he likely didn't want to be!

Daniel certainly succeeded in passing the character tests by those who sought to destroy his good name. He certainly succeeded when he remained humble yet insistent on not betraying his personal convictions regarding his diet. You and I may not understand why his Jewish diet was so important to him but it doesn't change the fact that it meant a lot to Daniel and it was connected to who he was as a person - as a child of God. He felt his diet was a way that he glorified God. He was unwilling to compromise that. He succeeded because he was faithful. God showed up because Daniel was faithful.

In his most memorable act, Daniel succeeded in being faithful when he refused to bow down to worship an idol. He was successful, not in the eyes of man but in the eyes of God. That is an example we can all aim to follow! He was willing to be the leader and others followed.

Ironically, God granted Daniel favor when he choose to endure persecution and peer pressure and the king himself had a change of heart!

Daniel impacted the lives of at least two world leaders, King Nebuchadnezzar and King Darius! King Darius actually decreed that everyone worship the God of Daniel!

Daniel's integrity changed the moral of government. I want to say that again in case you missed it. Daniel's integrity changed the morals of those leading in government! Here's my question: What will your integrity and faithfulness do for your city and your nation? Imagine the impact you can make on your city and your nation when you refuse to bow down to worthless idols, when you refuse to compromise your character in order to be accepted by the crowd, when you commit to serving Jesus with passion and humility. When you take the lead in that, people will follow!

Daniel knew that before he was a prophet, he was a son. Before he was appointed to the third highest position in the land (Daniel 5:29) before being taken into Babylon, he was a son of Jehovah, a son of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He knew his Jewish roots. He knew His God personally. He knew who he was apart from fame or failure, apart from popular vote or prison. He knew he was a son of God. He was rooted in son-ship. His identity was son-ship. Do your roots go deep? Do you know, deep in your gut, that before you are a leader, a dad, a mom, an employee, a business owner, a manager... **you are a son or daughter of God?** Are you secure in that? If so, you'll lead well, people will enjoy following you, God will honor your humility and you will endure!

The first goal of your life is to know God personally. You must aim to know Jesus as your brother and Savior, God as your Father and the Holy Spirit as your Comforter. Those who don't know the Lord personally are building their house, their life, on the sand. Those who build their life on the foundation of Christ are those who obey the words of Jesus and aim to know and obey Him above all else.

Holy Spirit thank you for being the voice of God on the earth. Thank You for leading us into all truth, reminding us of what Jesus said and how Jesus lived. Father, thank You that YOU lead us not into temptation, but instead, You DELIVER us from evil. For YOURS is the KINGDOM and the GLORY and THE POWER forever, AMEN.

Daniel was a prophetic dream-interpreter.

Group Discussion Guide

1. Daniel knew his Jewish roots. He knew God personally not just culturally. He would worship God on his own apart from any church service. I wonder how many Christians actually take time for personal prayer daily. Do you think it's easier for us to cave to cultural demands when we aren't spending time in prayer?
2. For instance, a Christian who trusted the Lord for salvation years prior but never takes time to speak to God and build that relationship will be more likely to compromise Biblical truths when faced with demands from culture - a culture that's growing more and more anti-bible and anti-Jesus.
3. Daniel knew who he was apart from fame or failure, apart from popular vote or prison. Do we know who we are despite *where* we are? What did you all think about that info-graphic Pastor Jordan put on the screen about Identity being where we find our value - not in the opinions of man or the gifts we use in the season we're in. Here's the image again...



4. To find courage in today's culture, we need to return to our identity as being GOD'S CHILD and find joy in that and that alone - not in the approval of others. Mathew Chapters 5 & 6. Split up the passages by going in a circle and as it's read, take notice of how many references there are to God being your Father or the mention of "brothers" or "sisters" then discuss this. *Leader, after it's read and everyone has commented, ask the group ...* How do these commands from Jesus suddenly become much easier when we have the right perspective - the perspective of son-ship?