

Keys to Consistency

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The prophet Daniel is described in various ways throughout the Scriptures. He is listed alongside Job and Noah because of his righteousness and wisdom (Ezek 14:14,20). In the book that bears his name, he is introduced as a “youth” and of the “royal family” in chapter 1. In chapter 5, he had the ability to “solve extraordinary problems.” In chapter 6, he possessed an “extraordinary spirit” and was “faithful.”

But one of the most admirable qualities of Daniel is his consistency. He spent all 70 years in captivity. One kingdom fell, another rose to power. Rulers came and went. But Daniel was constant. In Daniel 6, even the king who cast him into the lion’s den admired his relationship with God “whom you constantly serve” (6:16, 20). That word is also translated “continually” and “faithfully.”

Consistency is what we want in all areas of life. It’s why we keep going back to the same place to get our haircut. It’s what causes us to return to the same restaurants and even order the same foods. It’s what we want in an umpire or referee to call is both ways, the same for both teams.

Consistency is what we need in the kingdom. God is the same; He never changes. Doesn’t He have the right to expect a people who are consistent, no matter the circumstances or pressures that surround them? The world we live in is much like a lion’s den. It is dark. There are dangers around every corner. The devil is a “roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8).

How will we survive? Consistency is the key.

Decide early. Consistency is not born in the heat of battle. When Daniel learned about the new prayer law that was put into effect, “he continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God, as he had been doing previously” (6:10) or “as was his custom since early days” (6:10). In chapter 1, as a youth taken captive to Babylon, “Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself” (1:8). As an 80 year old man in chapter 6, the decision had already been made.

Everyday decisions are made simpler when you’ve made THE decision. “Seek first the

kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33) was said in the context of worrying over food, drink, and clothing. But when you make the decision to seek Him first, it also helps every other choice to fall in place: “Should I miss services?” “Should I respond this way?” “Should I post that?” Decide early to seek first the kingdom. And then make all other decision consistent with that one.

Be aware. As an official and a foreigner, Daniel was on display. When Darius sought to reorganize the kingdom, he planned to make Daniel in charge of all the rulers. Though they sought to destroy him, “no negligence or corruption was found in him” (6:4). There was not one skeleton in his closet, not one “now deleted tweet,” not one “hot mic” sound bite that recorded an embarrassing moment. They concluded, “we shall not find any ground of accusation against this Daniel unless we find it against him with regard to the law of his God” (6:5). Even Daniel’s enemies recognized his consistency! He had a conduct that matched his calling.

Opportunities are either won or lost on consistency. Be aware that your inconsistencies can become another’s excuses as to why they will not come to the Lord. “If you’re a Christian, why do you... watch those movies or TV shows? ...use those words? ...dress that way? ...drink? ...dance? Also be aware that your consistent conduct is a great tool for evangelism as it was for Darius (6:24-27). It’s what Peter said would happen: the very people who revile you in the end glorify God (1 Pet. 2:11-12). We are exiles in a foreign land. We’re on display. Be aware of the great opportunity that is yours.

Never fear. Because Daniel was different, he stood out. He was outnumbered 122 to 1. His fellow rulers “maliciously accused him” (6:24). Punishment for disobeying the prayer law was to be cast into a den of lions. Would that tempt you to conform? To close the windows when you prayed? To say the words without closing your eyes or bowing your head? But when Daniel was brought out of the den, “no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his God” (6:23).

The temptation in persecution is to give in. Never fear. “In God I have put my trust, I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me” (Psa. 56:3-4)? We must live the same, consistent, godly lives in the face of persecution. We can have the same attitude of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who said, “Our God is able to deliver us...but if not, we are not going to bow down” (Dan. 3:17-18). God has the power to shut the mouths of fear, worry, doubt, discouragement, and persecution. Trust Him. Never fear.

Daniel is mentioned only one time in the New Testament. And it’s not even in Hebrews 11. However, that passage does speak of those who “by faith...shut the mouths of lions” (Heb. 11:33). And it was a consistent faith at that.