

## THE ROUTINE THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE

One of the most difficult tasks we have as a follower of Jesus is learning how to be consistent in our faith no matter what life throws at us. Well this morning as we continue in our conversation concerning the prophet Daniel we are going to see a model of that consistency and just what is necessary to achieve it.

Today begins **Week 26** of our Through The Bible Reading Plan also known on the Bible App as F260! Congratulations to those of you who have been following along since February. You are now at the halfway point through the Bible. If you have yet to join in with us I encourage you to start today. It is never too late to join in. And as you are going to see through our message this morning, one of the key components to developing a consistent faith is for us to have a steady diet of God's Word so there really is no better time to start than the present!

Picking up where we left off from last week, Nebuchadnezzar ruled Babylon until his death in 562 BC. His son Belshazzar served as a regent in his father's absence and did not take the throne of Babylon until some 20 years after his father's death. Belshazzar only had a chance to rule as king for about two years before Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persian empire. So as we come to Daniel 6 the region of Babylon is now under the control of a new empire. There is some debate surrounding Darius who is mentioned in Chapter 6. There are some scholars who believe that the name Darius was not a reference to a particular individual but rather an honored title given to Cyrus who was the king of Persia. Another possibility is that Darius is the title given to a temporary ruler who would lead the Babylonian region under the charge of King Cyrus. Whatever the case, Babylon (the place where the Jews had been taken into captivity along with Daniel and his three friends) is now under the control of a new empire. And just like before, God is going to give Daniel favor with his new leader.

### **DANIEL 6:1-4 (NIV)**

**1** It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, **2** with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. **3** Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. **4** At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent.

**May this be the testimony of all of us who follow Jesus!** May our lives, our work ethic, and the way we conduct ourselves daily be a blessing to all those our life comes in contact with. Because Daniel faithfully ordered his life according to God's word, his life was filled with integrity and he became a tremendous blessing to those whom he served. Whether they were Babylonians or Medo-Persians, he was consistent in the way he lived his life and thus God gave

him favor with those who were over him in leadership!!! In fact, notice in verse 5 what was said about Daniel by those who were jealous of the favor he had garnered.

### **DANIEL 6:5 (NIV)**

**5** Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”

In other words, if they are going to catch him in something in order to discredit him it would have to be in regard to His relationship with God that would cause him to purposefully violate a decree of the king. What a testimony you and I would have if the only thing people could accuse us of is trying to be too much like Jesus! That is basically what is being said here about Daniel. If they are going to catch him doing something wrong it would have to be where his allegiance to God caused him to violate a decree of the king, very much like what we saw last week with Daniel’s three friends (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego). Last week we looked at THREE ingredients of GODLY CONVICTION that will make a lasting impact on those around us. Well this morning as we look at how Daniel faces a very similar situation, I want us to see the importance of developing spiritual disciplines and the role they play in preparing us for the trials that may come our way in life. So if you will find **Daniel 6** I am going to **PRAY** for us and then we will jump in.

As we take a look at what transpires here in Chapter 6 regarding Daniel’s life, I want us to first see the **spiritual disciplines** that shaped him as a person and then I want us to take a look at **THREE WAYS** these disciplines helped **Daniel OVERCOME the storm in his life**.

Btw, as we have said many times before here at VC, storms are a part of life. And just because you follow Jesus doesn’t mean you will not face them. In fact, reality is you are either in one right now, coming out of one or getting ready to go into one. After all, Jesus said this in **John 16:33 (NIV) 33** “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. What are “these things” Jesus is referring to here? He is talking about His coming death on the cross and how He must leave so that the Holy Spirit can come and be a helper to them. **33** “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. Especially if you decide to live faithfully for God. We saw that last week with Daniel’s friends. And Jesus even warned His disciples that they too would be rejected because of their allegiance to Him. But notice the last part of verse 33! **But take heart!** Don’t be afraid! Be encouraged! Be strengthened! Be filled with joy! Why? **I have overcome the world.**” In Jesus we are victors and we are overcomers! No matter what life throws at us if we have JESUS we have all we need to make it through with VICTORY!

So, **what were the spiritual disciplines that Daniel developed in His life that shaped Him as a person?** First, Daniel developed the discipline of knowing **GOD’S WORD** as highlighted for us in **DANIEL 6:5 (NIV) 5** Finally these men said, “We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God.”

**God's word was a code of conduct for everything in His life.** The Psalmist David described it this way.

**Psalm 119:1-3 (NIV) 1** Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord. **2** Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—**3** they do no wrong but follow his ways.

God's word gives us a firm foundation upon which to build our life. We don't have to figure it out with trial and error. We don't have to guess. God gives us the way to live that invites the blessing and the peace of God into our life. A way that never changes with time and that is always relevant even among the shifting tide of our culture. Are you tired of trying to figure things out for yourself? Are you tired of the struggle, the chaos and the conflicts, the drama and uncertainty that our choices bring? Have you given God's word a try? Not just reading it! But have you applied it to your life? For Daniel, God's word was a code that defined his conduct and it brought him favor with the people his life touched. The only people who didn't like him were those who were jealous of the favor he had received from the king. His work ethic and integrity exposed their mediocrity and they didn't like that very much.

Not only did it teach him "what to do" and "what not to do" it was also **filled with promises that would guide Him through the various challenges he would face in life.** Here's how David described the importance of God's promises found in the word.

**Psalm 119:49-52 (NIV) 49** Remember your word to your servant, for you have given me hope. **50** My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life. **51** The arrogant mock me unmercifully, but I do not turn from your law. **52** I remember, Lord, your ancient laws, and I find comfort in them.

God's word gives God's people hope in the midst of uncertain times. Do you trust it as much as Ed Piotrowski during a hurricane? It is a comfort to know that when all is said and done God's promises will come to pass and no circumstances we face will prevent it from being so. David found comfort in God's promises! Daniel found comfort in God's promises! Do you find comfort in God's promises?

And finally, **it was a gateway to a relationship with God.** The biggest thing in our lives that kills our intimacy with God is sin. It is God's word that tells us what is hindering our intimacy, it shows us the remedy and it shows us how we can remain intimate with God.

**Psalm 119:25-32 (NIV) 25** I am laid low in the dust; preserve my life according to your word. **26** I gave an account of my ways and you answered me; teach me your decrees. **27** Cause me to understand the way of your precepts, that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds. **28** My soul is weary with sorrow; strengthen me according to your word. **29** Keep me from deceitful ways; be gracious to me and teach me your law. **30** I have chosen the way of faithfulness; I have set my heart on your laws. **31** I hold fast to your statutes, Lord; do not let me be put to shame **32** I run in the path of your commands, for you have broadened my understanding.

David drew near to God because of His word. Daniel developed an intimate relationship with God through His word. How about you? Yes, God's word points out sin in our lives but it also leads us to the remedy! And that remedy is JESUS!! **Don't miss out on JESUS because you don't want God's word to point out your sin!** This is what became a stumbling block to Israel. They didn't like what the prophets had to say because they called out sin. But these same prophets also talked about the ONE who would deliver them from their sin. But because they were so adamant about rejecting the uncomfortable message pointing out their sin they missed God's very remedy for their sin - JESUS!!

Secondly, Daniel developed the discipline of **PRAYER** as highlighted for us in **Daniel 6:10-11 (NIV) 10** Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, (What was the decree? The decree was this, "Anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lion's den.") **he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. 11** Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. I want you to notice that these jealous leaders stalked Daniel and his relationship with God so much so that they knew his daily routines and they knew when they would be able to find him praying. If people were stalking your life, would they know when to find you praying and would they observe you having a relationship with God? You may not realize it but there are some people who know that you are a Christian and they are observing you and how you respond in certain situations.

For Daniel prayer was like breathing! It was the way that he stayed intimately connected to the God he served. It was a vital component to his worship and relationship with God daily. No matter what was going on in his life, he prayed consistently to God. Without it, he might as well be cut off from God and lifeless. Prayer for the believer is about communion with the Father as Jesus taught us in the Gospels and it was the key to peace in times of uncertainty as Paul taught the Philippian church in **Philippians 4:4-7 (NIV) 4** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

These two vital disciplines (KNOWING GOD'S WORD and PRAYER) shaped the very nature of who Daniel was. Everything that flowed out of his life that was good and beneficial flowed from these two disciplines that shaped his relationship with God. Without them Daniel would not be who he was. Notice how they helped Daniel overcome the storm in his life.

**First of all, spiritual disciplines need to be STARTED before the storm.**

### **DANIEL 6:6-11 (NIV)**

**6** So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: "May King Darius live forever! **7** The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any

god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. **8** Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”

This whole thing was being orchestrated for the sole purpose of trying to cause Daniel to fall out of favor with the king and because of Daniel's devotion to God above all else it was guaranteed to work. **9** So King Darius put the decree in writing. **10** Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. **11** Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help.

Daniel didn't wait until times of difficulty to make them a priority in his life. He made them a consistent priority daily beginning with the moment he gave his heart to God. Because these disciplines were already established in his life Daniel wasn't overwhelmed regarding the news of the edict. He was able to do what he did every day. He leaned on God in the moment of crises because he did so every day regardless. For Daniel it became a natural response rather than a response of last resort. Does this describe your life? Is leaning on God a part of your everyday life or is it just in times of difficulty?

**Secondly, spiritual disciplines PREPARE us for the storm.**

#### **DANIEL 6:12-16 (NIV)**

**12** So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: “Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions' den?”

The king answered, “The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed.”

**13** Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” **14** When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him.

**15** Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, “Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed.”

**16** So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!”

Because it was part of his daily life Daniel does not compromise nor is he even tempted to do so. He was prepared for what was ahead because God walked with him daily and he already knew He would see him through because he has already been trusting God and He has already shown himself faithful. It is harder to trust God now in the moment if you have never trusted Him

before. A faith muscle is built not by reading about or by watching others. It is developed by actually exercising it yourself. That is why the biggest step of faith anyone will take is the first step to trust God with your life. Imagine how much easier it becomes if you do it daily!!

**Lastly, spiritual disciplines PRODUCE FAITHFULNESS through the storm**

### **DANIEL 6:17-28 (NIV)**

**17** A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.

**18** Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep.

**19** At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. **20** When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?"

**21** Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! **22** My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty."

**23** The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

**24** At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

**25** Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth:

"May you prosper greatly!

**26** "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. **27** He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." **28** So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

When it comes to living out a life of faith we have to have endurance!

**Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV)** **1** Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, **2** fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and

sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

Jesus is our focus! Living as He did and looking like Him is our goal! Two things that were a priority for Jesus was the WORD of His FATHER and PRAYER that allowed Him opportunity to commune with His FATHER. The only way to have an endurance that is consistent is we have to be consistent with our preparation. A steady diet of God's WORD and an intimacy developed with God fleshed out through PRAYER is the only path to a consistent faith life! There are no quick fixes. No pills you can take for this. You and I have to put in the work of knowing God's WORD and PRAYER if you hope to have an enduring faith that is consistent! Btw, I know this to be true! REAL TALK, what are the two hardest things for us to practice daily? Is it not being in GOD'S WORD and PRAYER?

Do you want a consistent FAITH? Do you want a faith that ENDURES? Are you tired of the spiritual rollercoaster? Are you tired of the shame of disappointing the FATHER with your inconsistency? This is how we get there! A steady diet of God's WORD and a consistent daily PRAYER life that is more about worship and communion with the FATHER than it is about our requests! ( Would you PRAY with me?)

### **Worship Team Comes Back Up**

#### **Invitation:**

What step do you need to take today to develop these in your life?

Is it TRUST in JESUS for the first time? (Lead people to confess, repent and trust in Jesus)

Is it to start meeting with God daily through God's Word and through consistent Prayer?  
(Challenge people to start developing a consistent devotion life where they read God's word and pray)

For those who use the excuse they do not know how to do either challenge them to sign up for RIGHTNOW media.

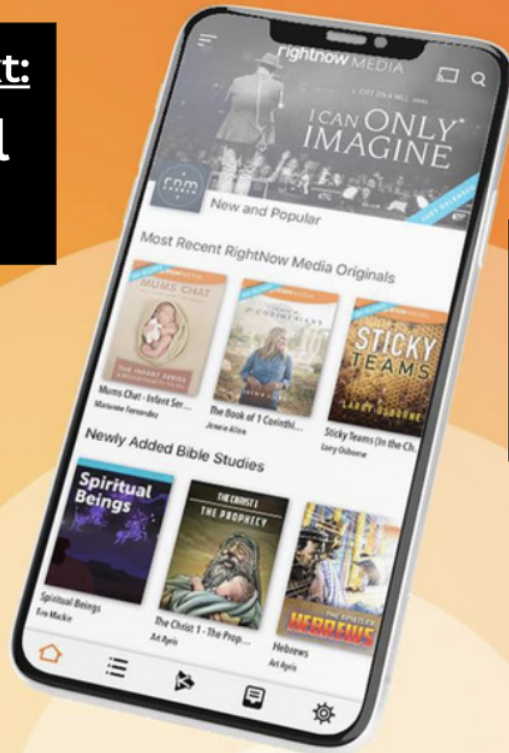




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Once you have signed up for FREE you will find on the platform a specific channel we have set up called **DISCIPLINES OF THE FAITH** where you can find resources to help you learn how to read and study God's word and learn how to pray if these are areas where you struggle. This is our gift to you and we hope that you will receive it and use it.

The rhythms that we establish early will be easier to continue as we practice them. Let us be a resource for you and let us help you develop a more consistent FAITH!