

#ObedientNotDefiant

I really appreciate that God gives us a New Year. The opportunity for a fresh start with new energy, new effort and new hope. I hope that you are ready to seize this opportunity. It only comes once every 365 days!

At Willow it is our custom to start the New Year off with a time of prayer and fasting to get our hearts aligned and receptive to what God wants to do in us as individuals and through us as a congregation. **2017 is to be a year of growth for Willow!** To grow in connectedness with each other and to grow in size as a congregation. And all of that starts by growing close to God. When Scott asked me to provide the kick off message for the 21 days of prayer and fasting I immediately turned to the book of Daniel. To me, Daniel is THE example of right alignment with God. What an amazing young man and what a powerful living example for all of us. Daniel's situation in Babylon is a direct parallel to our situation as believers. **We are both foreigners living FOR God in a world that is opposed TO God.** We share the same challenge as Daniel, to hold out our witness without losing our spiritual identity.

Daniel was successful in meeting this challenge because of his tremendous character. It is my hope that by reading the book of Daniel, I might get close enough to him that some his character will rub off on me. It's kind of like putting a fabric softener towel in the dryer. After tumbling together for a while, your laundry comes out smelling like the fabric softener.

@LionTamer627 The Real Daniel – Israelite by birth, Kickin it in Babylon, Vegetarian, Interpreter of dreams, Always on my knees, Highly Esteemed

I'm going to do today's message in a Twitter style using Daniel's twitter feed. My intent is to provide you with some short soundbites that will bring about some self awareness and simple application for your 21 days of fasting. Get your writing stick or your smart phone ready to capture some thoughts for later reflection.

Daniel may not be the first Bible figure that you think of when it comes to getting yourself aligned with God. He may not even be on your radar. That's because he kept a lower profile. He is not as outlandish and outspoken as John The Baptist or as bold and direct as Paul or as energetic and emotional as David. But don't let the low profile mistake you into thinking Daniel wasn't as passionate for God as the leading Bible personalities. **Last week Scott defined spiritual passion as a whole hearted, sustained, committed love for Jesus and His Kingdom which is demonstrated by:**

- 1) **Burning Commitment to God**
- 2) **Lifestyle Decisions that set us apart**
- 3) **Courageous words and actions @WDBCHolyMan**

Like JTB, Paul and David, Daniel checked all 3 of those boxes. Daniel had a different approach than those others. **Daniel was #ObedientNotDefiant. That's the big idea of today's message.**

You have to be obedient to keep your views from being soiled by the world. But it is equally important to avoid being defiant so that you are approachable by those who do not share your views. Think about that for a minute. You have to remain true to keep your light lit. But if you burn others with your light they will not come close enough to learn about the source of the light.

Daniel was made a resident in a foreign land that did not share his values. And he was to learn about that foreign culture so that he could then serve its leadership. From a spiritual sense this is a highly contentious situation. Kind of like placing an Aggie in Austin. Daniel could have fallen under the influence of the Babylonian culture and worshipped their gods. But he chose not to. He learned about the Babylonian culture without giving in to it. He remained loyal and steadfast to the Most High. But at the same time Daniel was not defiant towards the pagan society. He didn't speak out against the Babylonians. He didn't say their food was evil, he didn't say the King's decrees were stupid. He didn't crusade against their gods. He just lived out his faith in the everyday matters of palace life.

Too many believers are focused more on defiance than obedience. Pointing out everything that's wrong in the world instead of pointing the world to Jesus. They end up being as slanderous and divisive as those who oppose Truth. As believers we have to know our platform. Not everyone is called to be outspoken on everything all the time.

Franklin Graham has a platform similar to JTB. He's called to hold our leaders accountable, called to hold out the message of repentance and salvation, to be outspoken to a world that is blind and perishing. But Franklin Graham's platform is not my platform. My platform is at work, sharing Jesus through how I treat others, how I solve problems, how I interact. My platform is here at Willow, teaching the abundant life to Believers. Encouraging, strengthening, sharing what God has shown me. Freely I have received, freely give.

Certainly like Daniel we are to take a stand, to remain steadfast to God in the face of opposition. **But sometimes taking that stand means getting on our knees, not on our soapbox and not railing away at the world. You may be railing against the very thing God is trying to use to work in you.** Daniel had every opportunity to rail against King Neb and the Babylonians. He chose the better way, to point to Babylonians to God. He understood that the Israelites were taken into exile because the Israelites had sinned and turned their backs on God...not because the Babylonians were evil conquerors. The Babylonians were being used by God to turn Israel's heart to Him.

Be obedient, not defiant. Stand firm, stand apart, but stand with your arms open and ready to embrace the lost and hurting that don't share the Biblical values you are standing for.

Let's break down further this idea of being obedient but not defiant by looking at our introduction to Daniel and his first encounter with the pagan culture in Daniel 1:1-8. Read the passage.

Daniel 1:8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine. Resolved – a powerful word. Resolved – unwavering, wholeheartedly committed, intentional, purposeful, maybe even shaking its fist at opposition. And it's that fist shaking turns the world off to believers. But Daniel kept his fist at his side.

He was fully bent on remaining obedient but equally bent on remaining open to influencing the pagan culture. #ObedientNotDefiant And his approach left him available to accomplish God's purposes.

Tweet on obedience: Tempering desires, clear vision of right from wrong, making good choices, and being confident God will deliver.

Let's look at how Daniel approached obedience. He started by tempering his desires. Our desires are like a rudder that steer us. If we desire to be physically fit, we steer towards exercise. If we desire

company, we seek people out. If we desire solitude, we isolate ourselves. For Daniel, the desire for to remain aligned to God was much stronger than the desire for food. Similarly for us, a strong desire for God's commands goes a long way to heading off worldly influence. **Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. #Col3:2.**

Daniel had a clear vision of right from wrong long before he set up residence in the palace. He didn't look at the food and say "hmmm, is this okay or not". He knew the answer going in. **It is far easier to resist temptation when you have thought through your convictions well before temptation arrives.** @LifeAppBible You need to know where you stand on important spiritual matters. And you need to know your vulnerabilities. Scripture memorization is a powerful tool here. **I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you #Psalm 119:11 @ManAfterGodsOwnHeart** Obedience comes through being ready with God's word to ward off worldly attack.

Daniel made good choices. Daniel chose not to eat from the King's royal menu. He knew it would dull him spiritually and physically. Our choices set our obedience level. What we watch, what we listen to, what we read, what we expose ourselves to. A string of good choices puts us up on a rock, not easily shaken. But a mixture of good and bad choices and we become unstable. **Something as simple as who you follow on twitter can set in motion obedience...or disobedience. #IronSharpensIron** I've chosen to block certain people because they make things personal and attacking, even when they have relevant points. If I continue to read their tweets, I will start to emulate their attacking approach. I've purposely chosen to follow others who consistently provide timely truth and important character challenges.

Another part of Daniel's obedience was his confidence that God will deliver. Vs 1:12-13 Test us for 10 days. Daniel knew that God would provide all that he needed if he remained true to God. At the end of 10 days Daniel looked healthier and better nourished than those eating from the royal table. Would Daniel had taken this chance if he wasn't confident God would deliver? Maybe once, but not continually. You can be obedient for a time....but you can't be obedient over time, without confidence. Without confidence, obedience is challenged when things get rocky. Let's use tithing as an example. How many here who regularly tithe would even consider not tithing. None. Why? Not just because it's the right thing to do, but because you have experienced the opened floodgates of heaven and that gives you confidence to keep tithing even when times are tight. You have learned you cannot outgive God. Confidence is critical to remaining obedient.

But Daniel did not rise to 2nd in command in Babylon through obedience alone. The key to Daniel's influence with the Babylonians, including King, was that he was not defiant. Daniel had a choice on how we was going to be obedient. Being obedient by standing with fist raised or by calmly and reasonably stating his intended course. And that choice comes down to one thing...humility. **Humility opens the door to support from unlikely sources. #ObedientNotDefiant #Dan1:9** Daniel was under the authority of the Chief Official Ashpenaz and his guard. And Daniel understood these individuals would lose their lives if Daniel did not successfully develop. So Daniel did not go on a hunger strike – an act of defiance that would put he and the Chief Official at risk. Instead he asked for permission to eat vegetables. And in return for his humility, verse 9 says the Chief Official showed favor to Daniel. The book of Daniel shows this same humility pattern again and again. On multiple occasions Daniel had the opportunity to throw Babylonian officials under the bus because of their false accusations and fraudulent behavior, but he didn't. In fact, Daniel's wise and tactful responses saved the lives of the very officials who wanted to

kill him. Daniel's humility resulted in tremendous favor and admiration from the King. Showing humility can cause our opposition to become our ally.

Just as Daniel was created for his time in history, each of us was created for such a time as this. And each of us will have to give account for the time given to us. Let's not waste it. Instead let's seek to be remembered as good and faithful servants of the most high.

These next 21 days provide us the opportunity to renew our focus on our Kingdom purpose. **They are like spiritual smelling salts.** Smelling salts release small amounts of ammonia that instantly raise heart rate and lung function – immediately increasing the athlete's mental awareness and physical capability. This time of prayer and fasting is our Spiritual smelling salts. So let's breathe in deep from the Word and the Spirit so that we can renew our strength, get moving, and finish strong. The Lord spoke to me that for some here today these 21 days are a time to stop looking back and start looking forward. **A time for approaching your current situations with a new perspective.** When Daniel found himself as a foreigner in the service of a pagan King, he didn't look back and complain about being far from home, separated from his family and all that was familiar. Instead, Daniel looked forward and prayed for wisdom about how to do his new job to the fullest. And God gave him 10X greater wisdom and understanding than all the others. And God also gave him a new ability to interpret dreams through which he flourished in influence and favor. When we align ourselves to God's truth and humble ourselves under him, he provides us with the wisdom, insight and direction we need to thrive in the midst of our challenges. For those challenges you are tired of dealing with, set aside how you have been dealing with them and ask God for a new perspective.

21 days to renew, refresh, recharge, reengage, and look forward.

What are you going to do with this opportunity given to you?

#ObedientNotDefiant #NowIsTheTime #MuchIsAtStake

For CrossTalk

New Perspective. The Lord spoke to me that for some here today it's a time to start looking forward instead of looking back. A time for approaching your current situations with a fresh and new perspective. Daniel didn't look back and complain about his situation far from home, separated from his family. Instead, Daniel looked forward, knew that he was in exile because of Israel's sins...not because of the pagan Babylonians. So God gave him new perspective, 10X greater knowledge and understanding than all the others. Able to interpret dreams. Thus God raised him up to become a ruler in Babylon, to have great influence. When we align ourselves to God's truth and humble ourselves under him, he provides us with the wisdom, insight and direction we need to not just survive but to thrive in the midst of our challenges.

Just in time delivery. Example with Alex and Brooklynn

Resist the urge to comment on everything #BeQuiet