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Up until the end of July, we were examining the character of Daniel as portrayed in the book of Bible by his name.

I love Daniel! Not many youth as young as him have his quiet disposition, his serene confidence, in both himself and in the God he worships. There is something to be said about being confident in one's own ability to have made the right choice to follow God, who is Creator of all that is seen and unseen, the source of all life, and most important, being all that He is, God cares, loves, protects and lavishes everything He has, on the only thing in all creation He formed with His own hands and into whom He breathed His life, and that is you and me.

Such is young Daniel's confidence in God and in his decision to follow God, there is no doubt in his mind, that he trusts God's actions in shaping the history of the human race, and its ultimate restoration into God's perfect kingdom.

I find it significantly more beneficial to examine and study peoples' character, instead of trying to understand what they say and what they do.

*Jesus says, A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.*¹ Jesus was merely quoting the wealth of references in the book of Proverbs², *Keep vigilant watch over your heart; that's where life starts*³; *The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life*⁴, and many similar references.

The overriding theme of the Book of Daniel is that God is sovereign over the kingdoms of this world. Daniel lives through two powerful kingdoms and several kings, serving each at the highest echelons of government.

¹ Luke 6:45

² *A collection of wisdom sayings which reflect the heart and values of God*

³ Proverbs 4:23

⁴ Proverbs 10:11

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We read, as one nation rises and another falls, God is not only in absolute control, He is Lord of over **ALL** kings and rulers. More significantly, people whom God has chosen to serve Him and placed them in offices high and low, enjoy His divine and absolute protection. This should be encouragement for us. History informs us, after every demoniac dictator, there follows a time of relative peace. In the history of our own lifetime, we have witnessed leaders of people and countries who disregard the value God places on all life and put themselves in His place, some-times even above God. One world leader recently turned and looked up to the sky and said he was the "chosen one"!

This is the challenge to us, we who choose God's invitation to live by His standards: how do we hold-on to our faith in God and in the work of Christ, in the face of proud and arrogant leaders, against all the wrong and the evil in the world, against administrative systems and government policies that fly against basic human nature, everything that **seems to** contradict God is in control.

As we explored and probed into Daniel's life, four traits in his character challenged us:

The first trait is the **challenge of faith**: *Do you know Me (God) well enough to trust me? Do you know Me well enough, to trust my Word?*

The second trait is the **challenge of witness**: *Will I trust in God's promises, will I believe in God's Word, such that I can stick my neck out to declare Him to be true?*

The third trait is the **challenge of loyalty**: Daniel refused to be influenced by the trappings of the royal courts. He refused food and drink from Nebuchadnezzar's palace even when he was entitled to it, and he refused the offer of wealth when Belshazzar asked to him to decipher the mysterious writing on the palace wall, *keep your wealth, or give it to someone else, but I will still do my job, I will tell you what the writing means.*

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The fourth trait is the **challenge of trust** (12:9 & 13)

- a) *first, to trust God, that my life has greater meaning in the history of God for His people.*
- b) *then, to be trusted with the wisdom of God.*

Our character, like Daniel's, is shaped by these four traits: **faith, witness, loyalty** and **trust** (to trust and to be trusted).

For more than 60 years, Daniel served at the top rungs of governments under a variety of pagan kings, without compromising his relationship with God. He is considered one of **the** most righteous men in history. Ezekiel placed Daniel as being as righteous as Noah and Job⁵, and Jesus referred to Daniel as a prophet⁶.

But Daniel did not see his life's ambition, either as a government servant, nor as an advisor to kings and emperors, for which he was trained!

It is Daniel's character which defines how God uses him. In the face of the abuse of absolute power and the arrogance of hubris, Daniel uses his relationship with God to intercede on behalf of kings and emperors, and also for his people whose national identity, the Temple at Jerusalem, lay in ruins, and it is the character traits of **faith, witness, loyalty** and **trust** which enable him to be an effective intercessor.

Very often, I hear people belittle themselves, as not being worthy of being useful in the Kingdom of God. *I don't have what it takes..., I am not good enough..., I don't know how to..., I am not trained to...,* statements which make God a liar! God has made each of us, everyone one ever born on this earth, in his image. We are fearfully and wonderfully made to reflect God's glory to the world in which we live.

⁵ Ezekiel 14:14-20

⁶ Matthew 24:15; Mark 13:14

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The sin we are all guilty of, is to make ourselves believe, God has not done a good job in making us. We are not worthy of His love, of His care, or all that He provides for us, even when do not work for it. To believe that God has made us less than perfect, is to believe God can make mistakes, and to believe God to be such a person, is idol worship, which is sin.

Daniel's life and character, is a foretelling, foreshadowing of Christ's mission on earth: our single most important role in God's kingdom on earth, is to be intercessors between God and the people we know and the people we love, to pray that God will not hold it against those who do not know Him, and will be compassionate towards them.

The only way we can be effective intercessors, intervening on behalf of another in and through prayer, is to build a relationship with God through Christ, based on the character traits of **faith, witness, loyalty** and **trust**.

Even when life dealt Daniel a bad hand, short of being abducted from his home and taken into exile, to be taught, trained and shaped by a very different worldview, it was Daniel's absolute faith in God, his boldness to stick his neck out as God's spokesman, his loyalty to God his king and his absolute trust in God's hand in shaping the history of the world, which made the difference.

God invites us into this relationship with Him, and Jesus our Christ makes it possible for us to enjoy this relationship. In the upper room where they enjoyed their last Passover meal together, Jesus told Thomas, *No one approaches the Father, except through Me... knowing Me is knowing My Father; seeing me is seeing My Father.*⁷

It is not impossible to have the faith in God Daniel had, to be God's spokesperson in the world in which God has placed us, to be trusted by God with visions of His plans for us here and now! **Let's pray.**

⁷ John 14:6-7