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Do the Next Thing

Daniel 6:1-10

Prayer: *Father, we do thank you and praise you for the gift that you are to us as our heavenly Father. And Father, we just again thank you for all that you have done and continue to do in the gifts that you've shed abroad in our hearts. We just praise you and thank you for them, not the least of which is a place where we can come each week and offer up corporate worship to you without fear. Father, I thank you for that. I pray that as we arrive at this time in our service where we open up your book and again look at this gift anew and we pray that the power of your Holy Spirit would be here with us as we look into it because we know without your spirit it won't make any sense, and so we pray that your spirit would open up our eyes, our ears, our hearts and our minds and that you would give us the ability to make this of permanent value. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, if there is any word that we can use to describe Daniel's journey of faith, I think it would be the word "crisis." Now, I've spoken many times about that word "crisis." In the Chinese

language it's a combination of two different words, danger and opportunity because crisis is both. And one thing that we've been learning in our study of Daniel is that God often times sends opportunity to us dressed up as crisis. Now Daniel's crises were many and it's easy to lose focus by honing in simply on the crisis. I guarantee if you ask anybody about the book of Daniel, they're going to just go immediately to the big crisis and that's Daniel in the lions' den. But what God wants us to see in Daniel's life story is not just a spectacular answer to prayer like the lions' den was but instead he wants us to see a pattern of living that Daniel established going from crisis to crisis, and that's what God wants us to highlight and emulate. It's unlikely that you and I are going to face what Daniel faced, but it's not at all unlikely that each of us is going to face our own set of crises and until we see them as Daniel saw them, as literally engineered by God as opportunities, then we won't have the benefit of patterning our lives after Daniel's.

So how did Daniel handle his individual crises? I mean, what was his formula? What was his measure of success? How did he do it? Well, the answer is very simple: He did the next thing. Do the next thing is a statement that's often attributed to the late Elisabeth Elliot who was an incredibly Godly woman who led a life not unlike Daniel's, and she just died this past year. Adrien

Segal writing for *Desiring God* said this of Elisabeth Elliot. She said: "Here was a woman who knew the Lord. Here was a woman willing to serve the Lord no matter where he called her. Here was a woman who suffered the loss of her young husband as a martyr on the mission field, and then stayed for several years to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the same people who killed her beloved Jim. A few years later, she lost a second husband to cancer. Elisabeth Elliot suffered beyond what I could have even imagined as a wife and mother. And her response to it all? Trust in God, obey him, and do the next thing."

Do the next thing is a philosophy, it's both profound and simple. And what does that mean? Well, do the next thing means changing a baby's diaper if you're a new mom, it means grading a test if you're a teacher, it means defending a client if you're a lawyer, it means flipping a burger if you're a cook. It's recognizing the sacred in living your life and every part of your life for the kingdom of God. And as Daniel can certainly attest, it means facing each and every crisis in your life by trusting implicitly in God's sovereignty, wisdom, and grace and then just doing the next thing.

Now we've been through five chapters in the book of Daniel, we've been following Daniel's life of faith and it's been a series of

crises. If you remember, it started with the kidnapping. Daniel's a young man, he's forcibly removed to a distant country, a distant culture because the kings of Babylon, they often took the cream of the crop of those that they had conquered and trained them in the ways of their own country. So Daniel makes the first of his many decisions to trust God and do the next thing which for him meant studying the language and the culture of Babylon. His next crisis comes about when he refuses to eat the king's food. I mean there was something about this food that Daniel decided was defiling and so he did for himself what was the very next thing, basically said I can't eat this. Well, God blesses his vegetable diet and crisis number two is averted. In time crisis number three arrives. As a newly trained wise man in Babylon, he is now being hunted down for execution because the king wants all of the wise men in Babylon killed. You see the king had had this terrifying dream that no one could interpret and he determined that all of the wise men were playing him for a fool. Well Daniel again does the next thing. He meets with his companions and he prays and he seeks a meeting with the king promising him not only an interpretation of the dream but an explanation of what it consisted of as well. Crisis number three averted. See, Daniel's life consisted of a series of crises and in each crisis God gave Daniel an extra measure of wisdom, grace, and courage to bring him through. Daniel simply committed to doing each task that God has given him. He's basically

following a protocol that the prophet Jeremiah had established because Daniel knew that Israel was undergoing this difficult season of discipline for their idol worship and he knew that for 70 years they were going to be under the thumb of a foreign power, and he followed the prophesy of Jeremiah and Jeremiah had laid it out like this, he said this in *Jeremiah 29*, it says: *"Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiple there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."*

Daniel always used his position in Babylon to promote his God, to promote his people and the good of the people that he was surrounded with. That's just the kind of person that he was even though he was surrounded by a people as we in this culture often are who had no concept whatsoever of God nor any desire to acquire one. Daniel was still the source of light and blessing to those people. And so we hit the next crisis. This is crisis number four, and this is a big one. We all know this one, it's Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. And that crisis was

followed yet by another dream and yet another interpretation by Daniel and again Daniel does for him what is simply the next thing. He warns the king that if he doesn't do right severe discipline is coming, and the king chooses to ignore his warning. As you probably know, that's followed by seven years of Nebuchadnezzar's insanity. And when the king is finally restored we see Daniel moving on to the next thing. In this case it's a 30-year period of relative obscurity until he once again reappears on the scene to interpret Belshazzar's terrifying vision. If you remember, the king and his cohorts, they're drunk, they're mocking God, they're at that this large party and suddenly a hand appears and begins to draw on the wall. The king is instantly sobered and he is terrified. And so he calls his wise men and after his wise men all fail in interpreting the writing, he seeks after Daniel saying in *Daniel 5*: "I have heard that you can give interpretations and solve problems. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and have a chain of gold around your neck and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." Now notice Daniel's response. Daniel's been living his life for God and kingdom and he's absolutely unimpressed with the world and anything that it can offer him. This is what he says in verse 17, it says: *Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to*

him the interpretation." Once again Daniel is just doing the next thing. He tells King Belshazzar that his mocking of God has been judged on the spot, that he's been weighed in the balance and found wanting and that judgment for him was coming, and that very night Babylon is attacked and Belshazzar is killed. Daniel begins his service to yet another king. This is *Daniel 5:30*, it says: *That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.*

Okay. So here's where we are this morning. Daniel is about to step into the biggest crisis in his life, but he is prepared. I mean, each and every circumstance that he found himself in created in Daniel this certain knowledge that regardless the circumstance, God was faithful, God was sovereign, God could be trusted. That's where Daniel's power came from. God says in *Romans 8:28* that all things work together for good. I know you know that. I've said that over and over again. The hard part of life in the kingdom is learning to understand the definition or the difference between the definition that God has of good and what we have. If you were to ask me, well, what good do you wish for in your life? I'd probably say I would love to have a decent measure of health, I would want neither poverty nor riches, and I would like to have happy and well adjusted children. Well, that seems reasonable and even the scripture points to that. It says in *1 Timothy 2:1-3*: *First of*

all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior. Then we look at 1 Thessalonians 4:10, it says: But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, to aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one. So even the scripture is saying this is good and it's pleasing in the sight of God our Savior that we lead peaceful quiet lives, godly and dignified in every way. Well, that's precisely the kind of life that Daniel lived in himself. I mean, the events that swirled around him often times were anything but peaceful or quiet or even godly or dignified, but it never detracted from the peace and the power with which Daniel went about his business. And there's a reason for that and the reason is that God was building into Daniel's life a trust and a faith that followed God regardless the circumstance. That's what he's trying to build into your life and mine. Jesus stated it very clearly in John 10:27, he said: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." And what Jesus is looking for is sheep who will hear his voice and trust him enough to follow him

regardless the circumstance.

I know lots and lots of believers and I understand these believers whose trust is basically limited to circumstance. I mean, they go from circumstance to circumstance trusting that God is worthy to be trusted so long as the circumstance that they're in is going in the right direction. And so they fix their eyes on a goal or a situation, they pray fervently for God to bless this particular circumstance and then they trust that God is going to grant it, and when he does, they celebrate. But when he doesn't, well, then they mourn and often times the notion of God's trustworthiness for them is shattered. In time they pick up the pieces and then just start the process all over again. If you are certain that God's faithfulness is tied into getting you the specific answers that you suspect, you're setting yourself up for a great disappointment.

Let me explain what God wants to instill in you and me. It is a faith that is rooted far more in God's character than it is in circumstances that cause me to pray in the first place. Many years ago I preached a sermon about how God seems to abundantly bless new believers, and I titled the sermon "Now You See Me, Now You Don't" because it was my experience that God often needs to convince new believers that he's powerful, that he's loving, that he's kind, and that he answers prayer, that's the "now you see me" phase. That's

the milk fed baby stage and it's a wonderful stage and it's a blessed stage. But God doesn't expect you to stay there. I mean *1 Corinthians 5:7* says: *For we walk by faith, not by sight.* So at some point God says to all of us, "Now you see me but now you don't," 'cause he's building faith. That's what he's trying to build into each and every one of us, and if God is simply a cosmic gift giver, then all we'd have to do is sign a card, say a pledge, say the sinner's prayer and suddenly we're going to start experiencing this abundant material life or so the prosperity preachers would have us think. After all, *Romans 8:28* promises that God causes all things work together for good to those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. And we know it makes that promise but there's one word in that promise that lots of people like to define in many, many different ways and it's that word "good." I already told you my idea of good. My idea of good is reasonable health, reasonable wealth, and my children to be reasonably happy. You know that's not God's definition at all. In fact God gave his definition of that incredibly important word "good" in the very next verse after *Romans 8:28*. *Romans 8:28-29* says: *And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.* You see, God reserves the right to declare his definition of what the ultimate good in your life and mine is,

and it's not health, it is not wealth, and it's not even happiness. It's conformity to the image of God's Son. You see, God is laying out for us right from the start his blueprint for you and for me. It's his blueprint for every one of his children and he's telling us that he is so sovereign, so powerful, so loving and kind that he has the power to shape and direct every single thing in our lives towards one ultimate goal of absolute good, that is, shaping and molding us uniquely into the image of Jesus Christ. That is God's ultimate definition of the ultimate good in our lives. And every single prayer that you and I pray should have that as its ultimate goal, to shape and mold us ultimately into a unique expression of who Jesus Christ is. I mean, I cannot express Christ as you can and you can't express him as I can. Every single one of Christ's sheep has unique ability and responsibility to represent something unique about the nature of God's Son, and that's what God intends to draw out of every single one of us, and he uses Daniel as a type. I mean that means that Daniel's life points to and illustrates many of the aspects of the life of Christ including his faith, including his trust, including his ability to implicitly place all of his trust in his Father. I said the term for "crisis" also includes this idea of opportunity, and Daniel in many ways pictures the life of faith that God wants to develop in you and me because he saw every crisis as an opportunity. And so he leads this life of exemplary service and faithfulness both to God and to

the people God has placed in his pathway.

And now it's time for the next crisis. This is *Daniel 6:1-3*, it says: *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom; and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom the satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss.* Mind you Daniel is an old man now, he's lived a very long and full life and he's -- he can look back on his life as this series of crises that we can all look on as a model for how we are to live ours, because every time a crisis came into his life, Daniel, he just did the next thing, whether it was sticking to a diet of vegetables, meeting with his companions to pray or interpreting a terrifying dream of the king, Daniel simply stepped into whatever opportunity God was presenting with full faith and confidence that all he had to do was obey and leave the rest up to God. Well, Darius is bringing in this brand new form of government and so he divides the country into sectors and in each of these sectors has a governor, 120 of them, and over all of them he appoints an executive branch with three leaders, one of whom is Daniel. Once again Daniel, you know, he might even be almost 90 years old but once again he proves to be vastly superior over all of his contemporaries. And so Darius makes plans to make Daniel the head honcho, the prime minister. This is *Daniel 6:3-5*, it says: *Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other*

high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.

Now the scripture doesn't say whether it was corruption or just simple jealousy that drove the other satraps, but it does say that Daniel's performance was so exemplary that 120 state executives searching desperately could find nothing to mount even a single complaint against. I mean just think about Daniel's political record compared to the politics we are now engaged in. Yuck. Both sides spent most of their efforts now cataloging how awful, corrupt, and unqualified the other side is, and both sides have no trouble at all gathering evidence. All sides in Daniel's case looked for a single performance flaw and they could find nothing. And so the "go to" solution was the same one that we see happening today. This is verse 5, it says: *These men said, "We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God."*

Just want to -- let me take a brief side road for a moment here because this sentence to me has an all too familiar ring this

morning. You see, the events of this last week in Florida have been nothing short of horrifying, from a committed Christian singer being stalked and executed at a concert, to the murder of 49 patrons in the Pulse nightclub, to a little boy being stalked and taken from his family by an alligator, this part of Florida has seen its share of trauma. Now this mass murder at the Pulse nightclub is still being sorted out, but one thing that has surfaced again and again is the press reaction to the events. The facts are -- this is the facts as we know it. We have a highly disturbed, monstrously evil man shouting "Allahu akbar," breaks into a nightclub systematically mowing down its patrons and in the hours he spends systematically murdering as many people as he can, he repeatedly tweets out his loyalty to ISIS, his hatred and disgust for everything decadent in the West, and a significant segment of the press responds to this crime by saying it's the Christian's fault. What? The *Washington Examiner* said, "Christian conservatives are responsible for the mass shooting at a gay bar in Orlando because they 'created this anti-queer climate,' according to the American Civil Liberties Union attorneys." The *Washington Times* said very simply "LGBT activists blame Christians for Orlando attack." And the article continued: Lesbian author victoria Brownworth also weighed in on the issue, responding to a tweet from former Republican Governor Mike Huckabee expressing sympathy for the victims of the attack and their families, 'We don't want your

hypocritical prayers,' Miss Brownworth said. 'You led the fight against LGBT people. You promote this every day.'" We Christians are scratching our heads like Daniel must have. Now I know there are folks like the Westboro Baptist Church and others who actually tweeted out that they were glad that these murders took place, and they need to be condemned in the strongest of terms. But we also need to understand the big picture here. There are many in the LGBT community who view anyone who states the biblical position that any expression of sexuality outside of heterosexual marriage is sinful as spewing hate speech. Let me first just state the obvious, okay? The Bible categorically states it is sinful for a man or a woman to have sexual relationships with someone of their own sex, period. It is also sinful for a man or a woman to have sexual relationships with people of the opposite sex who are not their lawful wedded spouse. End of story. Now I'm not practicing hate speech towards homosexuals or heterosexuals when I say this conduct is sinful. In fact what I'm doing is what Christ calls us to do by insisting that this behavior has deadly spiritual consequences, and it needs to be called out whether it's homo or heterosexual. A murderer broke into the Pulse nightclub and he killed 49 patrons. If that same murderer had broken into a strip or a swingers' club and committed mass murder there, my reaction would have been identical. It's that deserves to be executed for being in a place that they shouldn't be, but make no mistake about

it, no one should be in those places. My issue with the reaction to this event is that it is one more cultural concession to the normalcy of sin.

Now I can stand before you this morning as a sinner saved by grace and tell you that the biggest issue with the Pulse nightclub is not the sin that takes place there so much as it is an attitude that the sin that it celebrates is no longer sinful. That's what's deadly. And that's what leaking into our entire culture. You see, God stands always at the ready to forgive sins. He says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* But there's a critical part to the promise of God to forgive and cleanse, and it involves confession. It involves agreeing with God's Holy Spirit when he convicts you of sin whether it's homosexuality or fornication or pornography or any of the other sins that beset our culture. Now I've said this before, an unwillingness to see sin as sin can turn any sin into an unforgivable sin simply because you no longer feel the need to seek God's forgiveness. When the culture serves to tell you that what God has forbidden is no longer forbidden, then the culture itself under the guise of tolerance is pushing you off a spiritual cliff. And when much of the church along with the popular culture begin to join in agreement that that is now hate speech to call

homosexuality a sin instead of a lifestyle choice, then you have a choice to make that you probably never even considered before. The question becomes do you love people enough to warn them of the danger when chances are good that that warning is going to be perceived as hateful. See, Daniel lived in a culture just like ours but he refused to be moved by the culture. He did what he knew was right and he left the consequences up to the sovereignty of God. And we are now in a culture that identifies us as murderous, intolerant bigots if we insist that what God calls sin is still sin. We are rapidly entering into a time when the common consensus will be that this is indeed hate speech. Now I've said this many times, you know, it's highly doubtful that somebody's going to come up to you and put a gun to your head and said if you deny Christ I'm going to blow your brains out. That's not going to happen. That kind of situation is the wholesale level. Instead you are going to be challenged to deny Christ on a retail level in a thousand different little retail ways, one of which is a failure to call sin sin. You may be thinking what business is it of mine what other people do? I mean I've got enough sin in my life, so what am I worrying about casting judgment on anybody else? But no one's asking you to cast judgment on anyone. See, what the culture is demanding of us, what it's demanding of you and me now is that for the sake of tolerance, we have to agree that certain types of sin are no longer sinful despite God's clear statement to the

contrary. The temptation here is to let culture and not scripture dictate and define truth, and it brings to mind a quote by Martin Luther. Listen to what he said hundreds of years ago. He said: "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at the moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved and to be steady on the battle front besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point." The flinch point today is sexual sin. And we live in a culture that says, "How dare you!" But it says "how dare you" when it comes to any judgment on any sin having to do with our sexuality. It's now off limits. I mean if you have any doubt, just look at the headlines behind the shooting at the Pulse nightclub. You see, I can warn my neighbor about the dangers of tobacco and cholesterol and even carbon dioxide. I'm going to get a pat on the back. But if I so much as wander into the realm of sexuality and go outside our culture's party line and warn somebody of the consequences of sin, then I better be prepared to pay a price.

So here's the question: Are you prepared to pay that price? Are you willing to risk the scorn and downright hatred that accompany taking those risks? Once again let me be crystal clear here,

sexual sin is sin whether it's homo or heterosexual. I mean if there was a movement afoot to make adultery and fornication as a simple life-style choice and not a sin, I'd be having the same conversation about that. Maybe there is. I wouldn't know. The grave danger here is that in a thousand little ways our culture is shaping and molding us instead of God's word. And faithfulness is not necessarily a matter of standing up on a soap box in front of a thousand people. It's being willing to say what God says in conversations over backyard fences, around dinner tables, and in school cafeterias. It's not declaring your loyalty to Christ only when someone puts a gun to your head, it's speaking the truth in love when your neighbor sees it as bigotry. God made the principle of faithfulness very clear in Luke 16, he said: *"One who is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much."* You see, when you begin to develop the practice of trusting God's faithfulness in little things, you put that under your belt over and over and over again, you get used to living that way, you're not going to be blown away when the big things present themselves.

You know, Daniel learned to live in the light of God's faithfulness, so when a big thing presented itself, he was perfectly prepared. And what did he do? He just did the next thing. Listen to what he did. This *Daniel 6:6*, it says: *Then*

these high officials and satraps came by agreement to the king and said to him, "O King Darius, live forever! All the high officials of the kingdom, the prefects and the satraps, the counselors and the governors are agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an injunction, that whoever makes petition to any god or man for thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the injunction and sign the document, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and the Persians, which cannot be revoked." Therefore King Darius signed the document and injunction.

Now Darius was either very weak or very foolish or he was both. I mean he either could not or would not see that he was being set up by the satraps. I mean, they used his vanity to construct this elaborate trap that was really set only for Daniel. And the bait that they used for that trap was that the king should be treated not just as a god but the only god, and that anyone who would petition anyone else would be thrown into the lions' den. This is Daniel's response, this is verse 10, it says: *When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously. It says Daniel "knew that the document had been signed" and he knew what had taken*

place, in all likelihood he knew exactly why it had taken place. But he did exactly what you would have expected of Daniel. You know what he did? He just did the next thing. I mean, to pray before an open window was something that Daniel had done over and over again. Giving thanks is what Daniel did three times a day. And it didn't matter that the satraps had set a trap for him, he was determined to do what he had done previously because it was the next thing to do. I mean he didn't go into the public square, didn't form a committee, didn't start a rebellion, he didn't even appeal to the king. He was in the middle of a crisis that threatened everyone who publicly displayed prayer or supplication to any other person except Darius with death. And what does he do? Well, he looks at his list and sees what the very next thing to do and next thing to do is to get down on his knees publicly and pray in front of that window "*before his God, as he had done previously,*" and wouldn't you know it, that's what he did. We also know the consequences were grave, and we know for a fact Daniel was essentially arrested and executed. The execution failed. But it only failed because God stopped the mouths of the lions.

And that's where I want to stop as far as the story goes right here, right now. We're going to conclude the consequences of Daniel's actions next week. But I want to ask what is our -- what's our take away for today? Our take away for today is God's

absolute sovereignty in our lives and how that affects our lives. I mean, how many people here know who Stephen Curry is? Just raise your hand if you know who he is. Okay. 50-50. He's the NBA's MVP. That's the National Basketball Association's most valuable player. That's what that means. Now if you've been following the playoffs at all, you know he's had a pretty rough time but if you follow his career at all, at least if you get a look at his sneakers, you see what he has written on them. Do we have that? I have that? Take a look at what is written on his sneakers. It's something that all of us need to remind ourselves of every single day. And regardless of whether or not his team, the Warriors, win, I would say Stephen Curry understands one of the most important lessons that life will ever teach us. If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, *we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.* And what God is saying to us here as we live out our every day life that no experience in your life is ever wasted. Ever. That God will use everything, the good, the bad, and the ugly as a means to shape and mold you into the very image of his Son. But his Son learned obedience through suffering, and we learn the same way. It was Daniel's way as well. I mean, we experience crisis and we cry out to God and we find out that he finds a way and then we move forward until we get to the next crisis. Daniel's way and our way are the same. And all the while we grow to

understand that God is doing something much bigger than we thought in our lives. He is growing trust, he is growing faith, he is shaping and molding us according to Romans 8:28. He gave us Daniel as an example of that. Daniel lived his entire life trusting in the sovereignty of God, and he also learned something very valuable about trusting God, whether it was the kidnapping, the diet, the dream interpretation, or the handwriting on the wall, Daniel simply trusted in God for the outcome. And you know, I mentioned what God is after in your life and my life, and what he is looking for is a trust that is not rooted in his predictability but rather in his character. I mean how many times have you prayed, "Oh, God, if you'd only do A, B, and C." And you find out God doesn't answer at all what you thought. He doesn't even give you D, E, and F, he gives you maybe J, K, and L or something way out of the realm of what you even thought of. You see, what God is looking for in us is an ability to trust him so that our prayers can be just as intense as Daniel's were and our expectation of answered prayer to be just as open-ended as Daniel's was. I don't think God ever answered Daniel's prayers in the way that he was expecting, ever. I mean from a magical diet to the shutting of lions' mouths, I mean no one, least of all Daniel, could have predicted God's answers. Daniel learned to trust God regardless the circumstance. And God was moving him from a trust based on circumstance to a trust based on character. And in the end, Daniel's trust in God was so set and

so secure that he could respond to each individual crisis with a common sense basic response that God wants from us when we find ourselves in our own individual crisis. What do we do? We do the next thing. It may be changing a diaper, it may be defending a client, it may be grading a test, it may be flipping a burger, it might also be confronting someone caught up in sin. It might also be standing up for God and his word when people around you grow more and more comfortable mocking it. I mean you might find just like Daniel found that God has an open door and an invitation for you to get on your knees and pray, that we understand the privilege that we have been given of the gospel, that we understand that God became one of us, that he lived the perfect life, and that he went to the cross and he offered up that perfect life as a sacrifice and substitute for our life of sin and that by faith in him, we, too, could have eternal life. That's the goal, that's the gospel, that's what we give. And the amazing thing is God is about the business of shaping and molding every single one of us into the image of the Son who did that for us. Understand that every single thing in your life has a point and a purpose, in what they say in Greek, a telos, it's a direction that everything points at. It's a design that everything points at. And doing the next thing is simply acknowledging that everything you do as a believer in Jesus Christ because of that is sacred. Paul said as much in *1 Corinthians 10:31*, he said: *So, whether you eat or drink, or*

whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. In other words just do the next thing. Let's pray.

Father, I just thank you for Daniel, I thank you for how he stands out in a culture that is corrupt and collapsing and how he stands as an example to us who live in a culture that is corrupt and collapsing. Lord, your call to us is in simple obedience do the next thing as you speak to us what that next thing is. My prayer is that we would have the courage and the wisdom to do just that. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.