

Veggie Tales

Introduction

Series Intro and Welcome Men of Faith.....Ordinary men that God uses to in extraordinary things.....Messed up people....used by God.... God's promises are true....His Covenant is binding.....No matter what....He keeps His promises

Stories and lives in the OT foreshadow future events and point to the Messiah Time after time we have seen Jesus in the lives of these men....They experience events that give us a glimpse of the events of Jesus' life yet to come.

We have seen this with Abraham, Issac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and now Daniel. We have seen the Israelites turn toward and away from God like a swinging door. We watched them wander through the wilderness.....We watched them whine....complain and drive Moses, Aaron and Joshua nuts.

We have seen ourselves in their stories...haven't we?

Why do we study these men? Why did God tell their stories in His Bible?

1 Corinthians 10:5-6, 11 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 11 Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.

Paul tells us that God wrote these stories down so that we could be instructed....that we might not desire evil as they did. That we can learn a lot about ourselvesfrom them

This week someone asked me....Who is your favorite?

I have been thinking a lot about that this week. My first response was Moses.....because he was such a great leader...and he put up with so much from the people he led...

But there has always been something about Daniel that I admired. Daniel had something that for many years of my life, I totally lacked.

I spent a large part of my early life....forcing my opinions on others. I loved to argue....to have discussions with others that were deep, challenging and enlightening....but never for me... You would be enlightened only if you decided to agree with me....

You see.....my opinions were always right....My assessment of the facts and my conclusions were never wrong. I would argue about my opinions at the drop of a hat, and I'd drop the hat. I was right, and I had to convince everyone that my way was the right way. I worked hard on being right about my opinions. So, if you disagreed, you must be wrong. After all, why would I intentionally be wrong about my beliefs?

MY ARROGANCE WAS SURPASSED ONLY BY MY OBNOXIOUSNESS.

One day it dawned on me why, when I joined the conversation group, I was soon the only one left standing there. I was literally running everyone off. Fortunately God has changed me and I am no longer that person anymore. I've mellowed, and I have more friends now.

But isn't that the catch with our beliefs? No one in their right mind would intentionally be wrong about their beliefs.

The problem is that our beliefs are not truths. For many years of my life...BC...I didn't really have any truth. Whatever I thought was true...period. I had my truth...you could have your truth and I believed that you should always agree with me

You see if you have your truth based on your feelings and opinions, then they can change over time and change with circumstances. Your truth becomes what works best for you in that moment.

When I found Christ...My entire world changed. I realized that my truth was not truth at all. The very foundation of my life had been a lie. I discovered that there is one truth and the source of that truth is God.

As I grew in my faith...I learned that my opinions, beliefs and "truths" had nothing to do with truth. God's truth existed long before I was born and would be true long after I am gone. His truth was true before He even gave me life and allowed me to weigh in on it.

People who live BC...Before Christ...have no source of truth. They believe what they choose to belief and truth can shift and change when they decide it must.

BC I had Strong opinions....and I was obnoxious and arrogant with them. If you didn't agree with me then you were just stupid. But AD I began to realize something....when I surrendered my life to God's truth and His Word, I found something rising up within me that I had never experienced before.

It was Daniel that showed me what was happening to me. As I read the book of Daniel early in my walk with Christ, I was struck by something very powerful.

Daniel lived by Convictions not Opinions.

I had never had a conviction in my life...

An opinion is something you hold; a conviction is something that holds you.

An opinion is something you'll argue about. A conviction is something you will die for

An opinion is a strong belief, but a belief that you will change under the right circumstances. Circumstances such as: 1) peer pressure; 2) family pressure, 3) lawsuits, 4) jail, 5) threat of death;

Most people will never die or suffer for what they know is just their opinion. But convictions.....Convictions are beliefs that are held so strongly.....that are so core to the essence of who we are.....that they will never change.

A conviction is not something that you discover.....it is something that you purpose in your heart. Convictions are the inside will always manifest themselves on the outside. They can't help but be expressed because they are the essence of who you are.

A conviction comes only from the realization that there is an absolute truth...an unwavering...non compromising truth....It was the Holy Spirit that revealed truth to me. And once I discovered truth...convictions naturally followed and opinions faded.

Once God speaks....there is no need for my opinions.. God has spoken and I have surrendered. Who am I to challenge the truth of God? I still have strong opinions about some stuff, but I just surrender my weak efforts to define truth and surrender to God's truth.

With a foundation of God's truth in my life....opinions seems to disappear and convictions began to define my life. What I believed in...I would die for...not because I said it, but because God said it.

Convictions are the few things that are non-negotiable in our lives....the beliefs that we are willing to die for.

For Christians....convictions are the beliefs we hold on to with every thing we have because we know God requires it of us. To violate our deepest conviction is to sin.

Most people have a lot of opinions. or preferences.....but they have very few convictions. Daniel's story is all about His convictions....things he was willing "to die for"

Daniel's Story

Remember Daniel has been taken to a foreign land.....against his will.....

George Schultz was the Secretary of State under Ronald Reagan. He had oversight of all the US Ambassadors all over the world. Every country had an Ambassador from the US. IMAGE 1 They were there to represent the interests of their President. They spoke...not their personal opinions...but the convictions of their US administration...They always represented the President and his agenda...failure to do was was treason punishable by death.

Secretary Schultz always had one final test for each ambassdor.... "OK, Mr. Ambassador or Madame Ambassador, you've passed all the tests. You've been confirmed by the Senate and you've passed your security investigation. You've done all the things to get the position of ambassador, but you have to pass my test. I have one more for you." And he'd take them over in the Secretary's office to where there was this massive globe, and he'd say, "I'm going to spin the globe and I want you to put your hand on your country." Shultz would tell this story, and he said, "Every single one of them failed. But I let them go anyway." Because whenever he spun the globe and he'd say, "I want you to put your hand on your country," they'd always put their hand on the country that they were going out to. His point was your country is the United States.

'Never forget you're over there in that country, but your country is the United States. You're there to represent us. Take care of our interests and never forget it, and you're representing the best country in the world.'

IMAGE 2 God tells us that we are His Ambassadors on earth...We are his representatives send here to represent His truth and the convictions based upon them. We are not here to give our opinions...we are here to represent our King....Our Lord...Jesus Christ.

This place is not our home..We have been spiritually reborn. Once we were humans having a spiritual experience, but since surrendering to Christ, we are not spiritual beings having a human experience. Our home is in Heaven...that is where our citizenship lies and our family resides. We are God's Ambassador's to earth...

We must never forget where our home is and who we are representing.....Heaven and God.

That is why Daniel is my favorite....His home land was destroyed...His city burned...His people starved, died and were tortured...He finds himself in foreign lands...with people who worship foreign gods and who have no truth.

And worse....as we discussed in detail last week...He is in Babylon, Jerusalem is burned and the Jews have been almost anialated and it all happened because God turned His wrath against His own people...and he used the barbarian pagan gentile Babylonians to do it. They were dispicable people and Daniel was now living in the midst of them.

But this is the incredible thing about Daniel...Even though Daniel was in Babylon...He knew to his core where he was from and who he was representing

Read Daniel 1:1-21

Daniel 1:1–4 (ESV) — 1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.

3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, 4 youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans.

See what he's doing? He's going to call on the brightest and best from Israel to help him assimilate the Israelites into his empire. And of course, to assimilate them, he has to a-acculturate them. He has to make them Babylonian Israelites.

So they must learn the language of Babylon and the customs of Babylon and the tastes and values and ways of thinking and theology of Babylon.

Can you imagine living in a sinful place where everything you know to be true is challenged and they are trying to force you to belief what they believe? You say boy...they say girl...You say God they say mother nature....You say sin..they say alternate choice...Can you imagine living in a place like that....I thought you could. We have a great deal in common with Daniel. We are now in a foreign land because, I believe, God

is punishing us for chasing other gods. What we know is being destroyed...we have dishonored God and are in the beginning of His wrath.

Daniel 1:5–7 (ESV) — 5 The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. 6 Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. 7 And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

Indoctrinate them into Babylonian culture.....Feed them with the best the King has to offer.....Change their Jewish names to Babylonian names... But they didn't just change their names....Names meant something back then....Names were descriptors.

Daniel meant "God is my Judge" Hannaniah meant "God is Gracious" Misael meant "Who is like God" Azariah meant "God is our Helper"

But their new names? They were not just chosen randomly...they were insulting and demeaning. Daniel "God is my Judge" is changed to Belteshazzaar "Bel is my judge" Hannaniah "Under God's Grace" becomes Shadrach "Under Aku's Command" Mishael "Who is like God" becomes Mesach "Who is like Aku?" Azariah "Servant of God" becomes Abendigo "Servant of Nebo"

The Babylonians weren't just giving them new names....they were trying to give them new identities. Hoping that they and everyone else would see them differently. It was all part of the Babylonian indoctrination. If you can't change the man, redefine the way people see him.

Daniel and his friends are humble enough and smart enough not to balk at being renamed, they know that sticks and stones and Babylonian spears can break their bones, but changes of names couldn't really harm them.

Interesting that Daniel never used or went by His Babylonian name. He always refers to himself as Daniel....

Daniel 1:8–13 (ESV) — 8 But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself. 9 And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs, 10 and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who assigned your food and your drink; for why should he see that you were in worse condition than the youths who are of your own age? So you would endanger my head with the king."

11 Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had assigned over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, 12 "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's food be observed by you, and deal with your servants according to what you see."

Note something critical here about Daniel's life.....Daniel RESOLVED Daniel had already decided...note it is past tense.....that there would be non-negotiables in his life....Daniel

didn't decide as challenges arose...He had already decided...that is what convictions do. They don't change with circumstances but are often revealed and empowered in circumstances.

Daniel didn't make that decision in Babylon....He made it in Jerusalem.....It is the product of what has been instilled into him....what defines him at his core...

Daniel used the word Defile.... Defile means to make unclean....to bring about disgust....to bring filthiness upon ones self.

The food wasn't really he problem..... Sure it many not have been Kosher....the wine was not forbidden.....The problem that Daniel had with the food was the source of its provision. Daniel was not promoting a vegetarian lifestyle He was not promoting a life of abstinence from alcohol He wasn't concerned that thanks for this food had been offered to false gods. Daniel knew what they were trying to do....

They were trying to brainwash Daniel by trying to get him to forget where his food comes from.....they wanted him to appreciate the source of this food....it came from the king's table.

Even though they were in a foreign land....serving a foreign King....Daniel knew that his food and his life depended not upon Nebucanneezer but rather only on God.

Also note that this request from Daniel could have cost him his life. Challenging the King even on little things was just not done. Remember what Nebucanneezer had just done in Jerusalem.....He would think nothing about murdering anyone who caused problems.

There is only one reason they didn't just kill Daniel then and there....

9 And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs

Daniel 1:14–16 (ESV) — 14 So he listened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's food. 16 So the steward took away their food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

Not only were they as good as those who ate from the King's Table....They appeared to be better in appearance and fatter in flesh.... Then Daniel became enemies with everyone in his midst.....they took away the food and wine.....and gave them VEGETABLES!

Note how God responds to Daniel's faith

Daniel 1:17 (ESV) — 17 As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Three years later the time had come....

Daniel 1:18–20 (ESV) — 18 At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 And the king spoke with them, and among all of them none was found like Daniel, Hananiah,

Mishael, and Azariah. Therefore they stood before the king. 20 And in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom.

So Daniel had his convictions clear... Even though he was in Babylon.....He had already decided how he would live and for whom he would live.....wherever he lived.

You want to try to train him in new ways of thinking....Go ahead....He already knows what he believes..... You want to call him by a new name...Go ahead....He already knows who really holds his identity But you want him to deny the source of his provision.....to believe that King Neb provides what he needs....no.... Only God can be the source of what sustains and nourishes Him. No one else can take His place in Daniel's life.

His unique and restricted diet was a reminder and reflection of where he came from. Vegetables reminded him that he was a person of God....living in a foreign land....and he was dependent upon God for his food....not Nebucanrezzar.

Non Negotiable

Daniel has been sent to foreign lands....His bosses were some of the most egotistical....ruthless....cruel kings of all time. Disagreeing with the King could mean instant death. They were not only hostile to the Jewish People but also to their God. Jews refused to acknowledge that the King of Babylon was not god. It took enormous faith for Daniel to challenge authority and we can learn a great deal about how to do so from his example.

Daniel's faith would take him to some inconvenient and uncomfortable circumstances His faith would put him in front of a King to interpret a dream....without being told what the dream was....and literally with his life depending upon the outcome.

His faith would put him in a sleepover with a lion. His faith would put him at a party to interpret God's judgment against the King by reading the writing on the wall Faith would put his three friends in the midst of a furnace where they would encounter the Son of God

It is clear that Daniel had Non-Negotiable Faith. Non-negotiable faith is often manifested in the small details.

No one would blame him for eating the king's food. No one would have blamed him for putting his prayer life on hold. No one would have blamed his three friends for bowing just this one time. After all....these were extreme circumstances in extreme times....right?

No one would blame the church for shutting down in a pandemic....extreme circumstances...right?

What many believers see as an exception to the rules, faithful men see as non-negotiable. It is not the big decisions that determine the quality of your faith.....it is the little ones.

So what is Non-Negotiable Faith?

How do we manifest that in our lives....How can we live more like Daniel in this foreign land where we find ourselves?

1. Non-Negotiable Faith requires that we have established non-negotiable in our lives.

What aspects of your life....your faith are non-negotiable? Non negotiable faith is more than just a set of religious beliefs. It is a commitment to risk everything we have for those beliefs.

Non negotiable faith means that we refuse to submit to the lie of situational ethics....Non negotiable are true, absolute, and practical in every situation

We had decided long before the Pandemic that the government and our society would never silence or shut down our church....So we didn't. It wasn't even really a decision...it was just living in a decision that had long sense been made.

What was non-negotiable for Daniel?

1. He had surrendered to a non-negotiable Lord

For Daniel, divine law always superseded man's law- no matter what the cost. The Three Friends refused to bow to anyone but the God of Israel.....even though the cost was a very hot night in a furnace

Daniel refused to stop bowing to the God of Israel even though the cost was a night in the lion's den.

Daniel knew his home....who he represented and to whose authority he had surrendered....This was non-negotiable.

We need to settle in our hearts right now....that no one will ever hold the power to overrule God's authority in our lives. It is non-negotiable for us.

We started Remnant Church on October 12, 2015. I had just come off of an experience where God's truth had been silenced. I remember sitting around a table at Gary Gassle's home and we declared that Remnant would never let any human or human agency silence God's truth. We would die before we would let that happen on our watch. We had no idea that Covid was coming in just a few short years....and our government would try to do exactly that. Our conviction made long ago guided us to stay open and we would not have compromised on it.

2. Daniel also had a non-negotiable Truth.

They had tried to brainwash Daniel and teach him the ways of the Babylonians. They tried to seduce him with the King's food....the King's name for him....and the comfort of living in the King's Palace.

Yet Daniel and already decided who would establish truth. He knew that the truth you believe is the truth you practice. He knew that our world will change but God does not

Like Daniel we must make God's truth in our lives non-negotiable.

Prophet came to warn the people....but over time they all drifted away....The prophet kept preaching....one day a traveler asked him why?..."In the beginning I hoped to change these people.....But now I preach only to keep them from changing me."

3. Daniel had a non-negotiable service.

Daniel knew that his service to the mission of God was not for sale. His priorities were clear.....God came first....Nebucanneezer came after that. Daniel was sold out for God. It was non-negotiable.

So Daniel had a non-negotiable Lord, a non-negotiable faith....and a non-negotiable service. But there are other lessons we can learn from Daniel as well.

This one is the most important I believe for our time- particularly now Here it is.

2. Non Negotiable Faith need not be confrontational.

I spoke about this last week in detail. We are to share truth in love, with grace, compassion, understanding and patience. During this reelection year...Christians need to share love or shut up. As I said last week...You can be completely right in what you are saying...and totally wrong in the way you are saying it. Learn from Daniel.

Daniel knew that the spirit of what we do is as important as what we do. Daniel made his point but refused to approach things in a confrontational manner.

Don't criticize the culture.....Lead the culture

Did you notice while we were reading that Daniel and his friends never said anything negative about the Babylonian culture. They didn't agree with it, they didn't enter into the parts of it that were against their morals and religions, but instead of seeing the culture as their adversary, they saw it as their ally.

Because God's ways are always better, they simply followed God's ways. And instead of competing with the other young men of their culture, they wound up leading them. They wound up with the best jobs and the respect of the king.

Daniel had tact....So many people lack tact. As I said last week, I don't do social media...because I can't stand to see Christians wagging their heads...spewing their self righteous venom...and not sharing the gospel in love. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, forbearance, goodness and SELF CONTROL. I can't remember the last time I saw that on Fox, CNN, any newspaper and any social media exchange. Daniel led with quiet strength that came from His deeply held unwavering convictions based on God's Truth.

Daniel had Tact...Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy. Our first option must always be to offer a peaceful solution.

We are never....never...never to use our faith as a weapon of self-righteousness.

Daniel learned to live peaceably in a world that was hostile to what he believed. Daniel did not let his own personal ego motivate him to prove others wrong.

Daniel knew he did not have to defend God....God could speak for Himself. Daniel's only motivation was to follow God and give Him all the glory.

We must understand that when our motives are pure we can live peaceably with others. We must check our motives before responding to confrontational situations.

3. A Non Negotiable Faith means embracing the Consequences of our Convictions.

Look at the response of Shadrach and his friends.

Daniel 3:16–18 (ESV) — 16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. 17 If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. 18 But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up.”

No matter the consequences...their faith was non-negotiable. Daniel knew that his non-negotiable put him "all in" He valued God more than he valued his own life.....He trusted God even when it meant putting everything in His hands- even his life. Daniel teaches us what it means to have Non-Negotiable faith.

Back in the day, I had a lot of opinions...My arrogance fuel what I believed should be a rewrite of this Bible. There were things in it that I wanted to change. Things I did not agree with. Things that seemed ridiculous. I felt like God needed me to help Him with this book. I felt the need to modernize it...actually to make it my book of truth.

But then I saw the cover and the Title.....HOLY Bible...Holy..words written by God...literally breathed by Him. This book self proclaimed to be God's truth...and it came with a warning not to change a single word or dot. It came to me unchanged after over 2000 years. I was arrogant, but I knew what Holy meant.

There was a moment in my life when my obnoxious arrogance collided with the Holy Spirit. It was an intense but short battle. I had been wrestling with the truths of this book. I had opinions about what God should have done and how He should do things going forward. I was standing over this book...trying to make it say what I thought it should say.

Truthfully, I had not read the entire book by that time....I certainly had not really studied it...and by no means was I allowing the Holy Spirit to teach me all things...or so I thought. I had never rejected a book before that I had never read. It kind of violated my scientific integrity. How could I reject what I had fully not read or studied.

At the time, I was doing some consulting work in Sarasota and was staying at the Colony....I know tough life..

I was studying Daniel...and the prophetic claim of their captivity for 70 years...I was studying the great world empires that were prophesied in order. Romans Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians....Greek...and it hit me...No one could have written this book but God Himself. God had proved to me that this book was indeed the Holy Bible.

From that moment forward...I stopped trying to stand over this book and instead surrendered to it. This book was written by God and contained His truth long before I was even here to disagree with it. I decided on the beach out at Longboat that for the rest of my life, I would never disagree with the truths of this book.

I would study as deeply as possible to try to understand everything, but if I didn't the problem was not with God or His truth...the problem was with my ability to understand or God's desire to reveal something to me. I decided to get comfortable being uncomfortable with parts of God's Truth.

This book is true even if I don't understand it. This book is true even if I don't like it. This book is true no matter how I feel about it. This book contains all the answers that I need and the Holy Spirit will teach me all things once I stop fighting Him. I realized that when it came to the Spiritual issues of my life...If God has spoken His truth...I don't have an opinion...I have surrendered.

Conviction comes from the realization that there is an absolute truth. An absolute truth that is worth dying for. Conviction is unwavering...non-negotiable and unchanged by circumstances. Opinions are held in the mind....convictions are held in the heart. Convictions are decided long before they need to be expressed or applied.

I gave the example earlier of Remnant staying open during Covid. That decision was made for me back in 1997 long before Remnant was ever a church.

On that beach I decided to obey God's truth....

Hebrews 10:24–25 (ESV) 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

We lost half of our church over that Conviction. I received a lot of emails about putting lives at risk and disobeying government authorities...That as I doctor I was being reckless...Every conviction that you have regarding God's word will cost you something in this sinful world. Accept it. We are not sent here as Ambassadors to blend in...we are sent here to represent our Home. To speak the truths of our King and to declare our Sovereign Nation on foreign soil.

In areas where my King has spoken....I have no opinion worthy of being expressed. Daniel is my favorite because he had convictions...and never wavered from them. If only I could come close to doing the same. Let's Pray.

