

Outline

Principled Passion vs. Poisoned Politics — Daniel 6

Today we come to the end of NICE. I hope, if you have been here for part or all of this message series that you have taken in the spirit of what I have been teaching. It has been titled NICE with a slash through it. However, I have not been touting a rebellion against kindness or encouraging people to live disrespectfully toward others. Quite the opposite – my desire and I believe the desire of God as taught in the Bible is that we would refuse to live superficially, with an obligation to be nice to others and live according to society's whims and other people's desires for us, but rather to be genuinely, heart-felt deep kindhearted and respectful to everyone, while at the same time being true to who God created us to be individually. And that we also be led by certain well-thought and constructed principles of goodness that we refuse to compromise in any circumstance or even in the face of polling information and popularity. If we strive to understand what it is to be "GOOD" in our hearts, we truly will have very little problem with being kind and respectful to anyone, whether we like them or not and whether they like us or not.

To show that the Bible teaches this principle, I have introduced us as a church to the person and life story of a Good Man named Daniel in the Old Testament Book that bears his name – the book of Daniel. I encourage you, if you have not already, read his exciting story this week and learn to follow his example of striving to be Good rather than hypocritically and superficially rubbery in what you believe. Just a side note here - We think that it is so important that we all know the truth and create a foundation of truth upon which to stand that we have created a course that is upcoming to explore creating those Key Foundational truths in our lives. It is the [Foundations Course that begins on April 19 at 8:30 on Sunday Mornings in the Band Room](#). I am going to be a student in this course and I would encourage all of you to take this course as well. [By the time you complete this course, I am confident that you will KNOW what you Believe and BELIEVE what you Know.](#)

Today we end the story of Daniel and we have come full circle in his life. He is an old man in this chapter, Chapter 6, but finds himself in a very familiar setting. He is in trouble. However, this time, Daniel is not necessarily in trouble over principle. Chapter 6 begins by telling us that Daniel has a reputation for being truly a good man with deep convictions. He has risen to a very high position in the land based upon his wisdom, his integrity, his good spirit. God has blessed Daniel's avoidance of the temptation to simply be nice and play the political rules and sway his beliefs with the wind of society and peer pressure or panicky fear. Yet another king has risen to the throne. The former King Nebuchadnezzar has passed on. His son, Belshazzar whom I talked about last week has been overtaken and the Kingdom taken away from him by a new nation – Persia, and a new king – King Darius. Yet, this new king has found great value in Daniel. The thing about Good people is that their goodness is usually quite noticeable among all the Nice people of the world. Their authenticity and blessed lives seem to always rise to the top and this is the case for Daniel. Look what King Darius finds out about Daniel.

[Darius reorganized his kingdom. He appointed one hundred twenty governors to administer all the parts of his realm. Over them were three vice-regents, one of whom was Daniel. The governors reported to the vice-regents, who made sure that everything was in order for the king. But Daniel, brimming with spirit and intelligence, so completely outclassed the other vice-regents and governors that the king decided to put him in charge of the whole kingdom. Daniel 6:1-3 TM](#)

The story has a fairy tale ending. All is good. The Good man is on top of the world. You know the only problem with being a truly good person that is filled with the confidence of knowing what you believe and believing what you know? Nice people who are faking it and trying to brownnose or compete their way to the top or who are less than honest and diligent are threatened by it. The problem with winning? Nice guys get jealous. They may not be willing to put in the effort to make it to the top or to endure the pain to develop deep roots. They want to be nice to you as long as it gets them somewhere or they get something out of it. But if it costs too much or interferes with their "good times" or makes them sweat too much, Nice guys want to cheat their way to the top and that often means taking out Good People along the way. [Betrayal is a "Nice Guy" with a mask and a knife.](#) Nice guys smile and make you believe they are on your side while scheming for ways to take you out. They are full of poisoned apples and

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venom tipped arrows. They bend the rules with smoke and mirrors to take out the good man who has achieved through character or possibly revealed the nice guy's lack of character and ability. And the problem? Some times, often, at least once in your life, the "nice person" succeeds in taking out the "good person." Look at Daniel's fix:

The vice-regents and governors got together to find some old scandal or skeleton in Daniel's life that they could use against him, but they couldn't dig up anything. He was totally exemplary and trustworthy. They could find no evidence of negligence or misconduct. So they finally gave up and said, "We're never going to find anything against this Daniel unless we can cook up something religious." Daniel 6:4,5 TM

The workplace, the Palace of Persia, is filled with Nice Guys that want Daniel out of the way. They are plotting to take him out. There is just one catch, though. People who know what they believe and believe what they know are not nice, but they are so good that it is difficult to find niches in their armor. Oh, they are not perfect and will be the first to tell you that. But they are good. Their hearts are good. Their motives are good. Their actions are good. Their treatment of all around them is good, even when they disagree with others. And good people engender respect. And that is where we find Daniel. King Darius respects Daniel. The people of the Kingdom of Persia respect Daniel.

But the Nice Guys hate Daniel and they want him out of the way. So what do they do? They get the king to foolishly and egocentrically make a law that they know flies in the face of Daniel's strongly held beliefs and leads to his attempted execution – thus Daniel in the lion's den. Look at this scandal:

The vice-regents and governors conspired together and then went to the king and said, "King Darius, live forever! We've convened your vice-regents, governors, and all your leading officials, and have agreed that the king should issue the following decree: For the next thirty days no one is to pray to any god or mortal except you, O king. Anyone who disobeys will be thrown into the lions' den." Daniel 6:6,7 TM

What a bunch of Brown-nosers! They are sucking up to the boss. They are filling the boss with the good press that they want him to know and then leading him right down the path to their own promotion, big bonus, stolen idea. And wouldn't you know it? Darius, the king who so trusts Daniel and so loves Daniel, falls for it. He buys his own good press and gets talked into doing something outside his belief system. He enacts that stupid, very silly, poorly thought out law. Somebody is going to get hurt because his ego gets in the way.

You know, we all fail at the Nice Thing in our lives. Just because you build a good foundation that is based on the Good Principles of God's Word in your life, it does not guarantee that you will not make political, ego-driven, fear-based decisions in your life. I know that I have made my share. I have believed my own press and been carried away by my own self-righteous ego and made "Nice Guy" plans that lacked thought and prayer and ended up hurting others. I have chosen to ignore what I knew to be good foundational principles and made selfish decisions that hurt others. That is why we must learn from King Darius and apply a **NICE GUY Repellant** to our Lives – **Don't Believe Your Press – You are never as good as others say you are and you are never as bad as others say you are.**

Darius got caught up in his press. Nice people will either flatter you or criticize you into making bad decisions. They'll either pump you up to get what they want or they will tear you down to get you to give up. That is what these "Nice" vice regents are doing here. They are flattering King Darius to put into place something that they can use to tear Daniel down. Never believe the press about you – the flattery, the gossip. Accept the compliment graciously, but give God the credit as your teammate of Good, then put compliments and critiques in a good place – history. Use them to spur you on to the new idea, the new effort, not to rest on your laurels as the foundation to build from – flattery and criticism make for a very creaky foundation – they contain a kernel of truth, but don't try to build a foundation out of popcorn – it will fail.

There will always be a Nice Guy ready to take out the Good Guy. Betrayal is around every bend. So

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what are we to do about it? Fear it? Stress out? Develop a paranoia that causes us to attack every moving shadow? No. We must rely on our God who is in control of Heaven and Earth and our lives and the foundation of truth that drives us. We must believe that He has a purpose for our lives and that He has numbered every day of our life and that He is faithful and will always provide for us. Nice Guys give in to the temptation to manipulate and control their universes and it leads to lives of stress and resentment. Good Guys live each moment and each day as a Gift from God and know that if He should choose, He will deliver, and if He should choose, He may allow us to go through deep valleys. Good guys do not turn to the right or the left, but stick to the straight and narrow and live by the convictions of knowing what they believe and believing what they know and that even in the dark time of betrayal, God is God and the Good Man or Woman is blessed both with each day and with Eternity. That is what Daniel does. Look:

[When Daniel learned that the decree had been signed and posted, he continued to pray just as he had always done. Daniel 6:10 TM](#)

Daniel did not change a thing, for he knew he was right. He lived in the confidence of the truth and that God is the defender of the truth. Good people sleep well, live well, for they know that they are living within the morality of God's good pleasure. They also have a deep-seated trust that God is good and that God's plans for their lives can only be good. How is your stress life? Are you confused and exhausted from trying to remember which life you are supposed to be living with which people? Do you have your church life and you act one way with your church friends? And do you have your work life in which you act an entirely different way with your co-workers and boss? And then do you have your party life in which you act altogether another way with your party friends? How about your family life? Your neighbor life? Your Parks and Rec soccer life? Doesn't it get really confusing and stressful trying to remember which person you are where?

Daniel did not get confused. He was the same at work, at church, at home, at the party, in the neighborhood. He changed for no one because he knew what he believed and he believed what he knew and he lived it in every circumstance no matter the consequences.

And the consequences did come. Much to his chagrin, King Darius was reminded of his decree by the tattle-telling nice guys and they held him to it, much to his distress. And the Good Guy? He got thrown to the lions – literally! Daniel went down. King Darius paid the consequence and had Daniel thrown in the lion's den. Notice how his work life and private life differed and how it caused him the stress we were talking about earlier:

[A stone slab was placed over the opening of the den. The king sealed the cover with his signet ring and the signet rings of all his nobles, fixing Daniel's fate. The king then went back to his palace. He refused supper. He couldn't sleep. He spent the night fasting. Daniel 6:17,18 TM](#)

Talk about stressed out! Now a word about betrayal – Learning what Good is and living it out will not guarantee you a stress-free life. There will be people who will betray you. There will be hurt in your life. God does not guarantee your safety. But He does guarantee that He will take care of you. If you have ever heard of a guy named Jesus, you know that Good People get thrown to the lions. However, heart-deep goodness does guarantee that God will be with you in those tough times and that God will give you the courage and the faith to go through them. Daniel got thrown in the pit. The "Nice" Guys won. But Daniel relied on God's goodness to see him through it.

You may get fired unjustly. You may lose your spouse to divorce. Your kid may turn her back on you. The friend may believe the gossip and reject you. You might get dumped by the belle of the ball and the other guy who stole her heart may win. No guarantees here that the fairy tale ending is yours. But God does promise that He will go into the lion's den with you. He does promise that He will increase your goodness. He does promise that though happiness may have fled your life, He will fill your heart with joy, with peace, and He will, if you will allow Him to, turn the negative into good. But this will only happen if you trust Him, if you refuse to manipulate the circumstances and be in control. If you want to control it

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and fight the lions on your own, He will let you – but good luck with that! Notice this promise and claim it in the midst of your betrayals:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 NIV

God will make you Good and He will use every circumstance in your life to build Goodness deeper into your heart and to purge the Nice right out of you if you will let Him. If you let Him, He will make the lions your pets and turn the lion's den into a Kitty Cat Club. That is what He did with Daniel. Take a look at the story in Daniel 6 when you get home today to see where the good guy finishes and what happens to the Nice guys. And the Good just get better, while the Nice just finish last. What is your choice? Good Man or Woman or just Nice?

Meditate on this promise from God as we close with this final prayer from the band:

I WOULD LIKE TO CREATE A MEDITATIVE MOMENT WITH THE BAND HERE EITHER WITH THEM STARTING INSTRUMENTALLY SO THESE VERSES CAN BE READ OR HAVING THESE VERSES AS THEY START THE SONG – YOU CHOOSE.

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 NIV

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

No, in all these things **WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS** through him who loved us.

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

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