

Momentum for Life 2

Daniel Intro

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This week we are going to begin with what I call D in my DRIVE acronym...the five daily life practices that give us momentum for life. This acronym, DRIVE, stands for the five daily activities I practice in my life. I need to include every one of these every day to keep momentum for life and to stay on the journey of ascent to reach God's purpose. D is the daily practice of devotion. The daily practice of devotion is a lot more than sitting down for ten minutes and doing Bible study. Devotion is the practice of being fully aware of God's presence and being fully present to God.

Do you know what team you are playing for ?

The 1990 World Series is maybe the greatest David vs. Goliath battle in baseball. The big, bad A's of Rickey Henderson, Jose Canseco, Mark McGwire, Dave Stewart and Dennis Eckersley looked primed to build a dynasty by making quick work of the upstart Reds and winning their second straight World Series. Four games later, Cincinnati

completed one of the most shocking World Series sweeps ,
by upsetting the a's. Rob Dibble recalled; That was a very unified
bullpen... Dibble said the team's best quality that season was its
unselfishness.

The next season started out promising, but they finished fifth in the
NL west division. Why?

Rob Dibble said it best; *too busy* cashing in on new found fame. Almost
30 year later we now know why nothing lasting came of the 1990 reds-
they did not have a lot of talent and most importantly they forgot
their team. The 1990 world series is the best reminder that a team
will always defeat a group of talented individuals.

The book of Daniel is named for the biblical hero Daniel-but when you
the read book you will find a team of young Hebrews who formed God's
team in Babylon. Their names are; *Among these were some from Judah:
Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 The chief official gave them
new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach;
to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. Daniel 1:6*

Throughout the whole book at Key Junctions we see Daniel,
shadrach, Meschach and abindigo working as a team. My theory is that
if Shadrach, Meshach and abindigo were not so hard so say: we would

have the book; shadrach, meshach, abindigo and Daniel. They may have shortened it to the four amigos.

When these young men arrived in Babylon, they came carrying wonderful names. Each name carried with it a testimony to the person of God.

- a. Daniel - God is my judge
- b. Hananiah - God is gracious
- c. Mishael - God is without equal
- d. Azariah - The Lord is my helper

Their names made clear they were on God's team-they were devoted to almighty God.

When they arrived in Babylon, they were given new names.

- a. Daniel became Beltshazzar - Which means, "Bel will protect."
- b. Hananiah became Shadrach - Which means, "Inspiration of the Sun."
- c. Mishael became Meshach - Which means, "Belonging to Aku."
- d. Azariah became Abednego - Which means, "Servant of Nego."

Nebuchadnezzar's goal was to change their identity and hopefully their primary allegiance. However, it is plain to see as one reads the book of Daniel, that even though their names were changed their character remained intact. From the beginning to the end of Daniel their allegiance was to Jehovah God.

Interestingly They were also all stars on the Babylonian team. Chapter

six says: *Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. 4 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. Daniel 6:3,4*

NIV can you imagine being politics for decades and no slime could stick because you were so clean. The four Hebrews were aligned with God-but they also played on a pagan team. The Babylonians likely destroyed their families and definitely destroyed their country. So why did they play ball with the Babylonians: because They knew without a doubt God was large and in charge and he had a plan. Because of their allegiance to almighty God they worked for the betterment of Babylon.

You see the people you work with are a team that God has called you to play a role in so they will be Profitable and maybe find God's purposes in the process.. I am a conservative but I am praying and cheering on President elect Obama on, because God has put us all on the American team to play a role in the coming kingdom of God.

Because of open enrollment in Colorado many get angry at a perceived failings of Elbert public school, but if God has called us to Elbert we can only have a positive influence is to play ball and keep Jesus as a our Lord. So understand we have a role to play on a earthly team but, we will always have a greater responsibility to god's team.

When the team of the four Hebrews were asked to compromise their dietary laws they replied: *Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see."* 14 So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. Daniel 1:11-13

They used their noggins, staying true to the God of Israel and supportive of the Babylonians. Remember what Jesus said the role of God's team was: *You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.*

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead

they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. You are only salt if you are working in the rotting society of this world. You shine brightest when placed in a dark room. When we are in the world and not of the world that is when we bring praise to God the father. We maintain our allegiance to God's team-we display devotion to God when we work for the betterment of those in our world. They kept their allegiances straight because of three disciplines.

I. Latch on to righteous relationships

On every team there are those who give enough effort, to please the coach-but not enough for the team to succeed. The 1980 Red Raiders of Loup city had the only winning football record at the school in decades. One of the reasons was Jim Jaeskche who weighed almost 300 pounds which was unheard of at that time. He was the guy who know how to find short cuts to wind sprints with out getting caught. He was the one who sucked up to the coach to his face and was always complaining behind his back.

He was the one who gave enough effort to please the coach, but not

enough for the team to win. And it was infectious: who wanted to run every last inch of a wind sprint? Needless to say we finished 6-4 lost in districts and never made it to state. Jim ? He was given a scholarship to Kearney State-he lasted a semester because they finally caught on to the fool's game he was playing.

The wisdom of scripture says: *He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm. Proverbs 13:20 NIV*

Right relationships can make a difference in our lives. Wrong relationships can bring us to ruin. For most of us, it's called peer pressure and it's everywhere. And it does not stop at high school graduation.

I have seen it illustrated this way and used it myself. A person can stand on a chair and try to lift a person of any size to their height. It's not easily done, but the person on the floor can easily pull the person off the chair to their level. And so it is with those who live a lower life than the person who desires to follow Christ.

Depending on the scholar you go the four Hebrews were likely somewhere between 14-18 when they were carried off to Babylon.

There were thousands carried off into exile: but it these four amigo's

stuck together out of their devotion to God.

It is harder for us to pull someone "up" to our level of higher living than it is for them to pull us "down" to their level of lower living. This is why we must choose our friends wisely. Here is how to choose righteous friends.

1. Stand up for Jesus

The fool says in his heart, "There is **no God**." They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is **no** one who does good. [Psalm 14:1-3](#) and back to Proverbs 13:20 it reminds us a fool will cause us harm. So we must not suffer fools in the close fellowship of righteous friends.

The primary ingredient of a righteous friend are they will to stand up for Jesus! Are they wise enough to put God first. Are they on God's team? If they are not wise in accepting God-our choice to walk closely with them will bring us harm. A righteous friend stands for Jesus.

a. Stand up to fire

Pepper Rogers, coach of UCLA's football team suffered through a poor season back in the 1970's. He came under intense criticism and pressure from alumni and fans. Things got so bad that he felt as if all his friends were gone. "My dog was my only true friend," he said. "I

told my wife that every man needs at least two good friends-and she bought me another dog." A true friend is there for you through thick or thin! A righteous friend stands up to the fire of difficulties.

b. Stand the test of time.

USA Today that reported the results of a study by the American Sociological Review. The researchers concluded that American adults have fewer friends than a generation ago, and increasingly fewer confidantes. Twenty-five percent of those surveyed said they had zero close friends. For those few who do have confidantes, 80% turn to family, and are less likely to count on friends from clubs, neighborhoods, or social and religious organizations. The report said the chief causes for these trends are longer working hours, less time for socializing, and living in the suburbs. how could living in the suburbs work against friendships?

If only making and keeping friends as adults., as when we were children. On the contrary, I think once you reach a certain point in life it becomes extremely difficult to make new friends, because making friends takes an investment of time, and that's a commodity we feel we have very little of. I can certainly relate to the fact that I put so much time into my job and my family that when it comes time for developing and nurturing friendships, I don't have much to give. So if you have a

friend you have kept and grown over several years they are a special friend.

They deserve to be kept at all costs-they are the type of friend God has put on your team. They are the type that can tell you are flat out wrong and still accept you flaws and all. A righteous friend stands the test of time.

II. Learn the Plays

To follow a National Football League coach from Monday to Sunday is to see a numbing succession of meetings, statistical analysis, critiquing of videotape, along with long after-dinner skull sessions when the scheming of plays and defenses are debated and ultimately agreed upon.

It's an exercise removed from anything athletic, a chess match of anticipated moves on a gridiron with 300-pound game pieces. The skill prized above all is the art of deception, as opponents' tendencies are examined and their weaknesses weighed. The goal is to play your game with your players, but to look completely different doing it. When it is done, an average game plan, bound neatly in a blue spiral notebook with plays and explanations produced by computer, is more than 125 pages thick. And that's just for the offense. The defensive game plan is another 100 pages.

All this work is done to try to control the outcome of a game played

with an oblong ball pointed at both ends that takes wild bounces.

PRO FOOTBALL: So Many Plays, So Little Time; Bleary-Eyed Coaches Play Chess With Pieces That Weigh 300 Pounds By BILL PENNINGTON Published: December 22, 1999

Playing on God's teams the stakes are not just a game-It is a matter of eternal life and death. God's children get themselves in trouble for one main reason: they have not learned God's play book. God's play are outlined in the bible-the more we know of scripture the more plays we can run from our coach god. Scripture puts it this way: ***How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. Psalms 119:9***

For Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abendego when the Pork chops were set before them the first supper in Babylon they knew it was not in God's playbook. For they responded: But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. Daniel 1:8

The four amigos remind us that must never forget where our home and our allegiance is - Heaven.

Daniel worked in a land that was hostile to the faith he held. His bosses were some of the most powerful, most ruthless, and egotistical kings in all ancient history. To contradict these men could mean death. The book of Daniel is a record of the many times Daniel's faith placed him in inconvenient and uncomfortable circumstances where the

odds were the highest. It was this atmosphere that Daniel stood firm with a "Non-negotiable Faith". He knew what it meant to have his faith put him in some inconvenient places. His faith would put Him in front of one king that wanted an interpretation of His dream or Daniels head. His faith would put Him in a den of Lion's. His faith would put Him in the middle of One King's wildest parties reading God's judgment for him off the wall. The three Hebrew children's faith would put them in a fiery furnace.

No one would have blamed him for eating the King's food - it was out of his hands, right? No one would have blamed him for putting his prayer life on hold - faithfulness to this devotion would mean the lion's den. . No one would have blamed the three Hebrew children in chapter 3 of bowing just this one time. What many believers see as an exception to the rules, these faithful men saw as non-negotiable. It's not the big decisions that determine the quality of your play on God's team, it's the little ones. Our devotion to God lives or dies in our little decisions. To make good decisions an athlete must know his or her playbook so well he does not have to think he reacts-he already knows the play and does not need to think. The four Hebrews were champions among the toughest of opponents, because their devotion to God

caused them to learn God's play book.

Sometimes our faith can become an inconvenience. It will place us in inconvenient situation. It can put us at odds with those around us. If not, it's time you take a look at your relationship with God.

When the boss man suggests that you lie to keep your job - your faith can be an inconvenience. When the guys at work start telling filthy jokes while you're standing there - your faith can be an inconvenience. When the cashier gives you more money back than was due you - your faith can be an inconvenience. How we respond to such times, will determine the quality of our walk with God. How we react to these awkward moments in a large part, will be how well we know the words of God. To play on God's team we must know his play book so well , we can just react righteously in the face temptation. Do you have a plan in place to know the bible better in 2009?

III. Listen to head Coach

The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. Daniel

6:7 NIv

When we come to chapter 6, Daniel is an old man. He has managed to make a positive impression on succeeding empires in Babylon, which included the leadership of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Cyrus and Darius. Obviously... He was a man of influence. Under Darius, he has been a top official that has grown in his influence. Now, even in his old age, he is up for a promotion, for the king has in mind to make him number two in the kingdom. He was an influential man because he was an honest man who prayed. In prayer he listened to his coach almighty God. So...when Daniel finds out that it is illegal to pray to anyone except Darius, what does Daniel do?

He opens up the window, just like he always has, and prays. Now, I ask you... Why didn't Daniel just close the window? What would be wrong with being a bit more discreet? Go ahead and pray, but don't make a big deal about it. But to Daniel, it mattered.

If he was accused before the king, he was going to answer truthfully. So if the king was going to find out anyway, why change? Why compromise? Be bold about what you believe. Remember you may work or play on a earthly team, but our first devotion is always to God. He

made it clear He was on God's team first. Daniel gives us the example that... **GOD'S PEOPLE KEEP PRAYING (NO MATTER WHAT)**. Because it is in prayer we get to listen to our head coach.

The psychology instructor had just finished a lecture on mental health and had proceeded to give an oral quiz to the freshman class.

Speaking specifically about manic depression, the instructor asked, "How would you diagnose a patient who walks back and forth screaming at the top of his lungs one minute, then sits in a chair weeping uncontrollably the next?"

A young man in the rear of the room raised his hand and answered, "A basketball coach?"

The good news is our Head coach needs not scream, rant or rave to make things happen. Our coach does not cry in frustration because as the old song reminds us : He's got the whole world in his hands! This is why our devotion to God and his team is found in praying no matter what-because in prayer we listen, ask and learn from almighty God.

Do you have wayward child-go pray-ask for God's power-Listen for his still small voice.

Do you have a financial deficit that keeps getting bigger-go pray-ask for God's provision-listen for his rain.

Do you have a conundrum that is beyond reason? Go pray-ask for

god's professorship-listen for his calculations.

In 2009 do you have a plan on how in your devotion to God-how you will learn to listen to God?

Conclusion: Some church leaders try to build a great church by putting more butts into the pew. The team at Elbert Christian church is seeking to grow by sending out as many of God's children into the world to work their butts of so the world may see their devotion to God and his team and praise God themselves. If your wish is to Join God's team at Elbert Chr Church, come up front as we stand to sing the song of decision.