

May 7, 2023

**RESOLVED: Better Choices, Better Life**  
**4 - I am devoted.**

In this series we are learning how to be “**RESOLVED**”. What does that look like? We are learning from the prophet Daniel that it looks like being **ready, consistent, devoted, kind, and faithful**.

In (Week 1) we learned:

When we have NO RESOLVE, we let our feelings overrule our logic and we choose short-term pleasure over long-term benefits.

In (Week 2) we learned:

Making good choices is a battle. You have to Pre-Decide to be faithful, and Pre-Solve your temptations to be battle ready.

Last week we learned:

Successful people do consistently what other people do occasionally. If it is important to you, you will find a way. If not, you will find an excuse.

**The title today is “I am DEVOTED”.** Here is a question to get us started.

QUESTION: Is there a difference between being CONSISTENT and being DEVOTED?  
I believe there is.

Think about the habit of prayer in your life. Is prayer an established habit for you?  
Paul instructed Christians ...

*Colossians 4:2 (NIV) Devote yourselves to prayer...*

For Daniel, prayer was more than merely a consistent habit. By chapter 6 in his life story, prayer was the way his now 80 plus year old being was filled with energy, purpose, and God’s power.

It is one thing to have a **consistent** habit of prayer, but it is another more powerful thing to be **devoted** to prayer. So what does it mean to be devoted?

“**DEVOTED**” refers to a deep commitment and dedication to a person, cause, or belief. It involves a strong emotional attachment and a willingness to make sacrifices for that person, cause, or belief.

In Daniel chapter 6, Daniel was so devoted to prayer that he’d rather be killed than deviate from his DEVOTION to God.

**Here's Chapter 6 in summary:** Daniel's life was so squeaky clean and consistent he was elevated to a high political office even though he was a captive Jewish exile. This bothered the other politicians. But Daniel's political enemies had a hard time figuring out how to remove him from his high ranking position since Daniel's track record was so clean and the King trusted him. They figured the only way to get rid of him was to somehow use his DEVOTION to God against him. They plotted, then tricked the King and set up a trap for Daniel.

They convinced the King to write a law instituting a 30 day celebration of the KING month. *Oh King, they say, we all think it is a good idea for you and the Kingdom that for 30 days everyone must demonstrate their loyalty to you and can pray to nobody but you and you alone.* The proud King loved the idea and wrote the decree as suggested. And as suggested, breaking the decree would be a capital offense. Anyone breaking this decree would be thrown into the lions' den.

*Daniel 6:10 (NIV) Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.*

- **I see a miracle here already.**
- What miracle?
- **The miracle of an incorruptible politician!**

**Politicians are not the only ones who need this kind of miracle!!** We all do.

- Recently, I heard that there are really only two things wrong with churches today:
  - The pastors, and the people.
- There. I didn't throw just politicians under the bus, I just threw everyone under the bus, myself included!
- The truth is: We all need the MIRACLE of God helping us become RESOLVED, READY, CONSISTENT, and DEVOTED!

This series "RESOLVED" is not self-help teaching. It takes TWO PARTIES to make this kind of Resolve possible. It takes YOU and GOD in covenant together. Are you ready to learn "How to be devoted"?

## HOW TO BE DEVOTED

### 1. Strengthen your EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT

God gave instructions on this topic in the Old Covenant scriptures. The most important instruction was this one:

*Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (NIV) Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

Daniel was very familiar with this. Every Jew was. They recited this twice a day!

But how do you read these instructions? Have you ever read this and felt like a big loser rather than reading it as helpful instructions?

I've felt that way sometimes because I often fall short of what the words seem to say. I don't CONSISTENTLY and PERFECTLY *Love the Lord [my] God with all [my] heart and with all [my] soul and with all [my] strength.* I often slip into the kingdom-of-me mode, "My will be done" mode. Pride pulls me back into a self-centered mindset rather than the God-centered mind-set. And when I'm in the wrong mind-set, I'm not battle ready I fail.

But this commandment was given to help me not condemn me.

- This commandment to love God is NOT understood through the lens of RELIGION but through the lens of a covenant RELATIONSHIP.
  - Jesus said this was the most important commandment. He did not say that because it is the most important tool to condemn us, but to help us.
- We need to understand that God didn't give us a RELIGION of RULES!!! But something far better than that.
- **God gives HIMSELF to us in a COVENANT RELATIONSHIP.**

Here's how it works. God initiates and we respond. He is the COVENANT MAKING, COVENANT KEEPING GOD, we are invited into covenant with him on the basis of his own GRACE.

We are invited to respond to his LOVING KINDNESS. And based on who he is, and what he has done, we can.

God doesn't want RELIGION from you, he wants a personal RELATIONSHIP with you.

*"Love with all your heart"* is the language of devotion. It calls for our love and loyalty in response!

This twice a day recited Jewish Routine: Is saying:

- I love you and am devoted to you. I invite you to be devoted to me.
- It's also saying in effect: *"If you are in covenant with me, you cannot have a mistress (or adulterous lover) on the side!!"*

That's what being DEVOTED means. No other gods. Don't be devoted to another!! Don't WORSHIP anything else.

Loving with all your heart is not about RELIGIOUS PERFECTION, it's about RELATIONAL LOVE AND LOYALTY!

- A married man knows when his heart is betraying his loyalty.
- And Daniel knew that obeying the king's decree would mean dishonoring God!

- His values were clear so his decision was easy and immediate! He was devoted to God no matter what!
- He could not let a mere mortal displace God's rightful position in his life.

JESUS gave us a pointed example of how this works, and he used the same kind of RELATIONAL LANGUAGE to do it.

*Matthew 6:24 (NIV) "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."*

Being "devoted" to MONEY. Means worshiping the wrong God. It's spiritual adultery. Don't bow to that God. Being devoted to money is like being devoted to a seductive mistress (or adulterous lover) who is not worthy of your devotion and is stealing your heart from God.

There is only one God worthy of the central position of your heart's devotion. As a matter of fact, God designed you to function best when he is the defining love of your life.

QUESTION: Is your heart's affections turned toward the one true covenant making and covenant keeping God, or is it devoted elsewhere?

## HOW TO BE DEVOTED

1. Strengthen your EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT (to the one true God)
2. **With an established RELATIONSHIP routine**
  - Daniel's **consistency** came from his well practiced routines.
  - Daniel's **devotion** was fueled by these RELATIONSHIP routines.

It is interesting that where most Jews recited the most important instruction twice a day, Daniel raised his devoted routine to 3 times a day!

Why more? The exile! Under these pressures he knew he needed more. He was devoted to fueling his love and loyalty during a very challenging and lengthy exile!

What are your routines for fueling your heart's devotion?

## HOW TO BE DEVOTED

1. Strengthen your EMOTIONAL ATTACHMENT
2. With an established RELATIONSHIP routine
3. **Pre-decide a TIME, PLACE, and PLAN**

Sometimes God shows me that my heart is not as emotionally attached to Him in love, loyalty, and exclusive devotion as I need to be.

Have you ever experienced that? If you have, here is what you can do:

- You can confess it to God.

- You can turn back toward God. Only God is worthy of the central position of your heart's devotion.

When we approach God in prayer, we find Jesus there. Jesus is also sitting at the heavenly throne at God's right hand. We might be feeling embarrassed by our sin, disheveled, and weak, feeling completely inadequate and disqualified. But we discover that when we turn to the throne of God, that it isn't the throne of judgment against us, but the throne of God's Grace because of Jesus. It is only a throne of Grace to those who humble themselves before the great Covenant making, covenant keeping God who made such access possible through his Son Jesus' accomplished victory.

- So Pre-Decide today a **TIME**, **PLACE**, and **PLAN** to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ by studying God's Word and Prayer. Keep approaching the throne of God's Grace.
- If you have never had a habit like this everyday, **START SMALL** and let it grow. Can you commit to 5 minutes a day? Start there! Start with Jesus, perhaps the Gospel John. Start there and let it grow. After 30 days, let someone know if your emotional attachment is starting to grow.



Talk It Over

**RESOLVED**

**Part 1- I am Devoted**

## SMALL TALK

1. Can you think of a time when you were falsely accused and how it made you feel?

## VIEWPOINT

2. **Read Daniel 6.** What motivated the other administrators and satraps to plot against Daniel?
3. How did Daniel's faith in God help him to overcome the challenges and dangers he faced as a high-ranking official in a foreign government?
4. What are some practical ways we can follow Daniel's example of steadfast devotion to God in the workplace or other areas where we may face opposition?

## GETTING PERSONAL

5. In what ways can we as Christians model Daniel's unwavering commitment to God in our daily lives and interactions with others?

6. How can we strive to maintain a strong and consistent prayer life like Daniel did, even in the midst of busy schedules and competing priorities?

## **MAKING PROGRESS (THIS WEEK)**

1. Have you pre-decided a time, place, and plan for growing closer to God, and what might that look like?