

## God's Assignment For Me

### 2. God's role for ME in the church

**Daniel 1:8-21; 6:1-10**

#### Introduction:

How would you judge success? By money and wealth? By reputation in the community? By monopolising the market? "Man... spends his life doing things he detests to make money he doesn't want to buy things he doesn't need to impress people he doesn't like." Joe Aldrich, "Satisfaction," Multnomah Press, 1983.

One person who was extremely successful by everyone's standards – the world's and God's – was Daniel. He obtained pre-eminence and power in his lifetime. He started out pre-eminent among the children of Israel – **Dan.1:3-6**. He gained pre-eminence among the wise of men of Babylon – **Dan.1:17-20**. He was given power over all of Babylon – **Dan 2:48-49; 5:29**. He received similar power over the Medo-Persian empire – **Dan.6:1-3,28**

How was Daniel able to reach these positions of power and influence without compromising his position as a godly man?

A close look at the book of Daniel reveals his secret, and shows how we too can be successful without selling our souls

#### I. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PURPOSE

##### A. "DANIEL PURPOSED IN HIS HEART" - **Dan 1:8**

1. A young boy in a strange land, Daniel was immediately faced with a challenge to violate God's law by eating the king's food
2. Despite his youth and the obvious pressures to conform, Daniel "made up his mind" to uphold the law of God, no matter the cost
3. Because of his willingness to put God first, God granted Daniel favour in the sight of others – **Dan.1:9**
  - a. How God did this is not explained, but it happened in the case of Joseph also – **Gen.39:1-4; 21-23**
  - b. By putting God first, God blessed Joseph in such a way that favourably impressed others

##### B. EVERY CHILD OF GOD NEEDS TO BE A PERSON OF PURPOSE

1. No one respects a "wishy-washy" person, someone with no direction in their lives
  - a. **ILLUSTRATION:**

Christians without goals are a little like Alice in the fairy tale Alice in Wonderland. In a conversation between her and the Cheshire Cat, Alice asked, "Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?" "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the cat. "I don't much care where," said Alice. "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the cat. Source Unknown.
2. Whereas a strong sense of purpose often instils respect and admiration in others
3. What should be the "purpose" of the Christian?
  - a. Jesus makes it clear **Mt.6:33** But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you
    - i. I.e., to seek the will of God and fulfil it in our lives, no matter the circumstances
    - ii. **ILLUSTRATION:** Bertrand Russell was born into a Christian home and taught to believe in God, but he rejected his training and became an outspoken atheist. His daughter, Katherine Tait, said of him, "Somewhere at the bottom of his heart, in the depths of his soul, there was an empty space that once had been filled by God, and he never found anything else to put in it." (Source Unknown)
  - b. As Jesus promised, doing this will guarantee God's favour toward us and in turn likely gain us favour in the eyes of those around us

## II. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PRINCIPLE

### A. HE REFUSED TO COMPROMISE HIS CONVICTIONS

1. As a young man, by refusing to eat the king's meat or drink his wine – **Dan.1:8**
2. As an old man, by refusing the gifts of Belshazzar – **Dan.5:13-17**
  - a. no sense or inkling of “what’s in it for me?”
3. Under the threat of persecution, by refusing to obey the decree of Darius – **Dan.6:10**

### B. PEOPLE ADMIRE PERSONS OF PRINCIPLE

1. Outwardly they may ridicule them, but inwardly they wish they had the same intestinal fortitude
  - a. People of the world will take the easiest option for the greatest reward
    - i. **ILLUSTRATION:** What are you willing to do for \$10,000,000? Two-thirds of Americans polled would agree to at least one, some to several of the following:  
Would abandon their entire family (25%)  
Would abandon their church (25%)  
Would become prostitutes for a week or more (23%)  
Would leave their spouses (16%)  
Would withhold testimony and let a murderer go free (10%)  
Would kill a stranger (7%)  
Would put their children up for adoption (3%)  
(Taken from James Patterson and Peter Kim, *The Day America Told the Truth*, 1991.)
2. And when they need someone that can be trusted, and depended upon to carry through with an assigned task, who do you think they will turn to?
3. God also admires individuals who will stand by their principles, and by their words – **Ps.15:1-5**

## III. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PURITY

### A. HIS OPPONENTS COULD NOT FIND ANY FAULT

1. He was faultless when it came to management of his business affairs - **Dan 6:1-4**
2. This would help to explain his rise to positions of great responsibility and power
3. Of course, his purity in business affairs was related to
  - a. His overall **purpose** to please God first
  - b. And the fact that as a man of **principle** he could be trusted

### B. THE CHRISTIAN IS ALSO TO MAINTAIN PURITY OF CONDUCT

1. Whether young or old – **1Tim.4:12; Tit.2:6-8**
2. Whether slave or free – **Tit.2:9-10**
3. People who maintain purity in their dealings with others are often given positions of great responsibility and privilege, because they can be trusted to use them wisely
  - a. “Be Holy for I am Holy” – **1Pet.1:16** *Illustration #4*

## IV. DANIEL WAS A MAN OF PRAYER

### A. A GLIMPSE OF HIS “PRAYER LIFE” – **Dan.6:10**

1. He knelt in prayer, a demonstration of his humility

2. He prayed three times daily, a demonstration of his continual dependence upon God
3. He gave thanks in the midst of persecution, a demonstration of his gratitude and the fact that he had not lost sight of God's blessings
4. Don't you think that his "custom" to pray so diligently helped him to remain a man of purpose, principle and purity, despite his rise to power and pre-eminence over the empire?

B. CHRISTIANS WOULD DO WELL TO FOLLOW DANIEL'S EXAMPLE.

1. **"Let us learn the lesson that the finest of God's servants must maintain regular and fixed prayer habits in order to continue steadfast in devotion to the Lord."** (Strauss)
2. As Christians, we too are to pray often – **1Thess.5:17-18; Col.4:2**
3. If our efforts to live purposeful, principled, and pure lives are not what they should be, could an undisciplined "prayer life" be the reason? **Illustration #5**

**Conclusion:**

There is a false assumption that to "get ahead" in this world one must conform to the sinful practices of the world. But even today there are many Christians who demonstrate that when we decide to be like Daniel that we can succeed in the affairs of men without selling our souls to the world.

How about you? When you ask yourself what are you willing to do to get on in life? When you ask yourself what does God want me to do, to be, in his church? In my family? What is God's role for ME in his church? Will I answer – like Daniel?

PURPOSE? PRINCIPLE? PURITY? PRAYER?

**Illustration #5**

A tale is told about a small town that had historically been "dry," but then a local businessman decided to build a tavern. A group of Christians from a local church were concerned and planned an all-night prayer meeting to ask God to intervene. It just so happened that shortly thereafter lightning struck the bar and it burned to the ground. The owner of the bar sued the church, claiming that the prayers of the congregation were responsible, but the church hired a lawyer to argue in court that they were not responsible. The presiding judge, after his initial review of the case, stated that "no matter how this case comes out, one thing is clear. The tavern owner believes in prayer and the Christians do not." J.K. Johnston, *Why Christians Sin*, Discovery House, 1992, p. 129.

**Illustration #6**

Dan Crawford (1870-1926) spent most of his adult life serving as a missionary in Africa. When it was time to return home to Britain, Crawford described to an old Bantu the kind of world he was about to return to. He told him about ships that ran under the water, on the water, and even those that flew above the water. He described English houses with all of their conveniences, such as running water and electric lights. Then Crawford waited for the old African to register his amazement. "Is that all, Mr. Crawford?" the aged man asked. "Yes, I think it is," Crawford replied. Very slowly and very gravely, the old Bantu said, "Well, Mr. Crawford, you know, that to be better off is not to be better." W. Wiersbe, *The Wycliffe Handbook of Preaching & Preachers*, p. 188.

- "... Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons - but they are helpless against our prayers." Sidlow Baxter
- The angel fetched Peter out of prison, but it was prayer that fetched the angel. Thomas Watson
- When people do not mind what God speaks to them in His Word, God doth as little mind what they say to Him in prayer. William Gurnall (a saying of a Puritan preacher).