

Discipleship In the 90's - Part 3

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Introduction:

A. An old spiritual friend died in his 70s.

1. He was always smiling.
2. He wasn't a dynamic leader.
3. Some people grow weary of serving God. (Malachi 3)

B. Is it really worth following God?

1. Those who fear the Lord continue to serve him.
2. Reading from the scroll was an important part of Israel's history.
3. The scroll of remembrance was read for the king when he couldn't sleep. (Esther 6)
4. In heaven the scroll of remembrance will be opened and we will be remembered.

I. Today I want to talk about Daniel, one of two men in the Bible about whom nothing negative was said.

A. He lived in a secular world in which only he and his friends knew the Lord.

1. Daniel was taken to Babylon as captive. (Daniel 1)
2. Daniel and his friends were chosen to serve the king.
3. Daniel resolved not to defile himself by eating the royal food and wine (Daniel 1:8)
4. Unclean meat was not to be eaten by Israelis. (Ezekiel 4)
5. Daniel's overseer didn't like this idea but Daniel suggested a test period of ten days. (Daniel 1:12)
6. They passed the test and God gave them wisdom and knowledge more than their contemporaries. (Daniel 1:17)
7. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that no one could interpret so he commanded the execution of all the wise men. (Daniel 2:17)
8. Daniel and his friends prayed and God gave them the interpretation. (Daniel 2:28)

9. Nebuchadnezzar promoted Daniel.
10. Later the king built a statue for all to bow to, but Daniel and his friends refused.
11. Daniel's friends were thrown into a blazing fire. (Daniel 3:15)
12. They committed their fates into the hands of God, just as Jesus did in Gethsemane.
13. We also need to commit our lives to God in difficult situations.
14. To God be the glory in our lives.
15. Daniel's friends were delivered in the fire. (Daniel 3:25)
 - a. It is better to be in the furnace with God than outside alone.
 - b. God delivers in trouble.
16. They praised God for his deliverance in their lives and Nebuchadnezzar glorified God.
17. The king promoted these three men.
18. Later Daniel was tested and was thrown into the lion's den. (Daniel 6:3)
19. The king passed a law that no one could worship any god but him and Daniel refused, committing his life to the loving God.
20. These men had been spending time with God and therefore committed their lives to him.
21. When Daniel was delivered Nebuchadnezzar rejoiced.

B. What happens when disciples make a covenant to live out daily life in the presence of God?

1. They keep strong and keep perspective.
 - a. They agreed together to honor God together.
 - b. One disciple can encourage the others.
 - c. Peter preached at Pentecost thousands were saved. (Acts 2)
 - d. We need each other to hold firmly to the end. (Hebrews 3:14-15)
 - e. God is right on schedule in his plan for the world and we can trust him to save many and bring all in subjection. (Ephesians 1)

- f. We need each other for mutual encouragement. (Hebrews 10:24-25)
- g. In college I had friends that agreed to serve God.
 - 1. Several of them have been very fruitful in ministry.
 - 2. Through good times and bad they remained faithful.
 - 3. I needed help several times over the years.
 - 4. We gathered recently to see one who became seriously ill, and as we prayed for him he went into the presence of the Lord.
 - 5. We agreed again to finish well in our walk with God.
 - 6. We are clay vessels but God is our strength. (2 Corinthians 4)
- 2. God works through them to glorify himself and accomplish his purposes. (2 Chronicles 16:9)
 - a. The eyes of the Lord look throughout the earth to strengthen those who serve him with a whole heart.
 - b. God is with disciples when they gather in his name. (Matthew 18:19-20)
 - c. A few brothers met to pray for their dormitory during college.
 - 1. Eventually they started a Bible study.
 - 2. Many came to faith.
 - 3. Prayer is powerful.
- 3. They finish the race.
 - a. We want to finish well.
 - b. Paul buffeted his body so he could finish his race. (1 Corinthians 9)
 - c. Many finished their race well, a cloud of witnesses. (Hebrews 12:1-3)
 - d. Runners know the importance of throwing off encumbrances while they run, and spiritually speaking we need to do the same.
 - e. I worked myself up to run 7 minute miles but one day with a friend I found that we were running a 6 minute mile and I couldn't believe it.

f. We need others to encourage us.

g. I have committed myself to run my spiritual race with a few other brothers.

h. Good relationships are essential. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)

II. Prayer.

A. The speaker reads a poem about a little boy in a race.

1. Beginning well, the boy quickly fell and thought of quitting.

2. His dad encouraged him to get up and run again.

3. The boy fell a second time and again the dad encouraged him.

4. A third and fourth time the boy fell and nearly gave up but when he remembered his dad's encouragement he just kept on getting up and continuing on.

5. Though he crossed the finish line in last place he encouraged many who struggle in their race of life.

6. We all need to keep getting up to continue our race.

B. Father many of us are now running our race in different laps and we want to finish well.

C. We long to hear you say, "Well done good and faithful servant."

D. Help us to link up with others for mutual encouragement.

E. Lord help us as we return to our lives to love others with the love of Christ.

F. Amen.