

Daniel's Evangelism Strategy Daniel 4:27

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This morning I want to use Daniel as a model evangelist. We usually don't think of Daniel in those terms. We think of him as a statesman. We think of him as a prayer warrior. We certainly think of him as a prophet. He was all those things. But Daniel was also an evangelist. His style of evangelism in today's terms would probably be "lifestyle evangelism." He evangelized as he carried on his daily duties and as opportunities presented themselves.¹

His style was very different from that of John the Baptist, for example. John the Baptist was extremely confrontive in his approach to evangelism. He called the Pharisees and Sadducees a brood of vipers (Matt. 3:7). He was more like the Christian on the street corner yelling "Turn or Burn." No wonder he wound up getting his head cut off. He was not one bit diplomatic in his approach. His message was simple. "*Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"² "God is here and He is commanding you to repent."

Is that the wrong approach? It was not the wrong approach for John the Baptist. Jesus said "*among those born of women there is no one greater than John*" (Lk 7:28 NIV). He must have been doing something right to get that kind of commendation from Jesus. But when we look at Daniel's approach to evangelism, we will see something that looks (at least on the surface) very different.

Philip fits more closely with the image we have of an evangelist. He went to Samaria and conducted a city-wide crusade. Acts 21:8 refers to him as Philip, the evangelist. People responded in mass. His approach was to preach Christ to the crowds. He did that with power and demonstration of the Spirit. Many unclean spirits came out of people. There were miracles in his services (Acts 8). John Wimber called this style of evangelism "power evangelism."³ This is what Jesus told His disciples to do.⁴ This is what Paul did in his ministry.⁵ John the Baptist did no miracles (John 10:41). Billy Graham did no miracles, yet he is one of the greatest evangelists of our time. Reinhard Bonkee had great evangelistic success in Africa. He did it much like Philip did. Is it wrong to lead people to the Lord without miracles? Is it wrong to lead people to the Lord with miracles? It is right to lead people to the Lord either way. Who here would tell Billy Graham to not preach the gospel unless he could do it the way Reinhard Bonkee does? Who would tell Reinhard to stop working miracles and do it the Billy Graham way? Paul even went so far in to say that he rejoiced when people preached Christ even if they weren't doing it with the right motives. Phil 1:18 "*What then? Only that in every*

¹ We don't see Daniel going out on the streets doing "street evangelism." We don't see him behind a pulpit at a church or synagogue preaching his message. He does operate supernaturally in his interpretation of dreams, but he is not casting out demons or healing the sick. He is operating in his gifting the way God called him to do it.

² Matt. 3:2. All Scripture quotes are in the New King James Version unless indicated otherwise.

³ Wimber's book, *Power Evangelism*, was published in 1986 with Harper & Row (San Francisco). In power evangelism the gospel is proclaimed in the context of the miraculous. Daniel's evangelism operated in the context of supernatural interpretation of dreams, and might be termed power evangelism for that reason.

⁴ Mark 16:15-18; Matt. 10:5-8.

⁵ 1 Cor. 2:4; Rom. 15:19.

way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”

Regardless of what style of evangelism a person is using, we should rejoice that the name of Jesus is being proclaimed.

I have noticed over the years that Christians are more prone to argue over how it is to be done than to actually do it. “One day a lady criticized D. L. Moody for his methods of evangelism in his attempt to win people to the Lord. Moody’s reply was: ‘I agree with you. I don’t like the way I do it either. Tell me, how do you do it?’ The lady replied, ‘I don’t do it.’” Moody responded, ‘I like my way of doing it, better than your way of not doing it.’”⁶

Here is the Apostle Jude’s take on evangelism (Jude 22-23) “*And on some have compassion, making a distinction; 23 but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.*” Jude is saying your approach should vary depending on the person and the situation. You need to make the distinction. Some should be approached with tenderness and compassion. Others need to be awakened with the fear of God. They need to be saved “*with fear*” as Jude puts it. I have heard many people say you don’t get people saved with hell fire and brimstone preaching; you should be gentle and loving. Jude says, Yes, some people respond well to the gentle, loving approach. But there are other people who need to smell the flames of hell and make a decision. It takes the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to know when to do what.

What I want us to understand before we look at Daniel’s evangelistic efforts is this: there are various approaches to evangelism, there are a variety of ways and methods. In 1 Cor. 9:22 Paul said, “*...I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*” The means is not nearly as important as winning some to the Lord.

Be careful about criticizing the method someone else is using. We all have a tendency to think the way we’re doing it is the right way or maybe even the only way. We should (like Paul) rejoice anytime the gospel is being preached. Someone might say, “But they’re doing more harm than good.” And I ask, “How do you know that?”⁷ What if their confrontational approach is preparing the person to receive your gentle approach? Or what if their gentle approach prepared the person to respond to your direct call for repentance? One sows the seed, another waters, another reaps. It’s God who gives the increase.⁸ I’m not saying it’s wrong to analyze methods. In fact, we should make rational choices about how we will bring the gospel to others. But be careful about criticizing others for not doing it the way you do it. And then here is the really big issue. Don’t be like the lady who criticized D. L. Moody. Take the message to others in some way!

Having talked about different styles, I want to talk about three components of Daniel’s evangelism that I find in the various styles for effectiveness. What I’m about to say about Daniel was also true of John the Baptist, Jesus, the 70 that Jesus sent out, the Apostle Paul,

⁶ D. L. Moody Quotes retrieved 12-2-16 at

<https://www.bing.com/images/search?q=d.l.+moody+quotes+on+evangelism&qpvtd.l.+moody+quotes+on+evangelism&qpvtd.l.+moody+quotes+on+evangelism&FORM=IGRE>.

⁷ On the surface it might have looked like Stephen was doing more harm than good, since the result was to anger the audience (Acts 7:57-58). But the problem was not Stephen’s message or style. The problem was in the heart of the hearers. And who knows how his message may have prepared Paul for his conversion?

⁸ 1 Cor. 3:6-7.

Philip, and others in the Bible. These components need to be there regardless of your style.
Three simple principles behind Daniel’s success in evangelism:

I. Live a consecrated life to God yourself.

I’m not saying you have to be perfect. If that were the case, none of us could proclaim the gospel. But we should be sincere. We should believe it enough to walk in it ourselves. Otherwise the credibility of the message is undermined.

Look at Daniel in his teens as he is brought into Babylon as a captive slave. His first priority is not how he will straighten out all these pagan Babylonians. His first priority is to be true to the Lord himself. So he is being groomed by the chief eunuch to serve the king. In that context they want him to eat meat that has probably been offered to idols. It’s described as food that would defile him ceremonially as a Jew. First let’s talk about what he does not do. (1) He does not just go along with the program. He does not just compromise his convictions for the sake of peace. It could be very tempting to do that. In fact, he could tell himself, as a slave, he has no choice. (2) He does not combatively take a self-righteous stand with the chief eunuch. Instead he makes an appeal, asking that he might not defile himself with the king’s delicacies. When the chief eunuch explains why his request is denied, he makes another appeal. This time he asks for a 10-day test and the chief eunuch grants his request. Why is his request granted? His approach was not rebellious; his approach was respectful. Daniel 1:9 also says this: “*Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of eunuchs.*” There are two sides to that statement. Obviously, God was at work giving Daniel that favor. But in conjunction with that, Daniel was behaving himself in a way that brought that favor upon him. We don’t know the details; but the favor didn’t just happen in a vacuum. There was something about Daniel’s lifestyle that caused this chief eunuch to listen to him.

Jump ahead several years when Daniel is a respected counselor in the Babylonian kingdom. King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream in Daniel 4. In this dream he sees a tree that grows tall and vast. It becomes food and shelter for the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Then an angel pronounces a decree in the dream to chop down the tree to just a stump. The angel also says let him graze with the beasts and let his heart be changed from the heart of a man to the heart of a beast. Let this go on for what Daniel interprets as seven years. None of Nebuchadnezzar’s wise men could interpret the dream. So Daniel is called in—why?-- because he already has a reputation for wisdom. His lifestyle for many years is giving him this platform to speak. I will talk later about the interpretation that Daniel gives Nebuchadnezzar. What I want us to see now is this. Had Daniel’s life been inconsistent, this opportunity would have never come.

We’re talking about this principle of evangelism: live a life consecrated to God. That gives weight to your message. Daniel had earned the right to speak. He had credibility with the king. That gave Daniel the opportunity to say what needed to be said.

Now let’s jump to the latter part of Daniel’s life. The Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar is dead. The Persian king, Darius is now ruling. Daniel is somewhere between 80 and 90 years old.⁹ Three times a day he opens his window toward Jerusalem and prays. His consecration to God is just as strong as ever. I have been young, and now I’m getting a bit older. To my

⁹ W. A. Chriswell estimates his age to be 88 years old when he stood before Darius (*Expository Sermons on the Book of Daniel*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971) p. 133).

surprise, I've found this journey doesn't necessarily get easier as you go along. When I was young, I thought how wonderful it would be to become this elderly, godly man who experienced no temptation, just sitting around dispensing wisdom for all to enjoy. Reality is a little different from that. There are special temptations associated with being young. But there are also other temptations associated with being old. The question is this: will we be faithful to God in every season of life? Daniel has found one secret to doing that: a strong, consistent prayer life. Daniel stayed consecrated to God all the days of his life. He finished well! Most people don't finish well. That reality is alarming to me. But it is true. You find it to be true amongst people in the Bible.¹⁰ And you will find it to be true as you observe Christians around you. I'm not saying it was easy for Daniel as a teenager to take the stand he took. I am saying, it's more impressive to me that he is here in his 80's just as committed as ever.

Most of you know the story of Daniel and the Lion's Den. Daniel's political enemies tricked the king into signing a decree that no petition could be made for 30 days except to the king. Here's the setting: Dan. 6:3-9 *"Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm. 4 So the governors and satraps sought to find some charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. 5 Then these men said, "We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God."*

[So here is the testimony of Daniel's life. They did all they could to dig up some dirt on him and could find nothing. What happens when you start telling people about Jesus and making a difference? People will feel convicted, some will be envious, there will be various motives; but people will try hard to find something wrong with you to justify or position themselves. Daniel's life is put under scrutiny and they find nothing, so they maneuver to put him into a no win situation.]

6 So these governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! 7 All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. 8 Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." 9 Therefore King Darius signed the written decree."

From beginning to end Daniel has stayed consecrated to his God. That is the first component of his successful evangelism. The second component is this.

II. Trust God's involvement in the process.

These governors have put Daniel in a hard place. He has committed himself to prayer. But if he holds to his commitment he will be thrown into the lion's den. What is Daniel to do? Should he compromise his commitment for just 30 days? No, Daniel trusts God with the situation. He does what he knows is right to do and he leaves the results with God. He is thrown into the lion's den. But instead of that being the end of Daniel, God intervened and it became the undoing of his enemies and the promotion of Daniel. More importantly it

¹⁰ See Robert (Bobby) Clinton's book, *The Making of a Leader*.

demonstrated to King Darius and ultimately to the whole kingdom that Daniel's God is alive and well on planet earth.

Daniel didn't just live a good life. He lived a life of faith. There are times and events in our lives when we have to put up or shut up. This was one of them for Daniel.

Go back with me to Daniel's earlier days with King Nebuchadnezzar. In Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar had a dream that troubled him. He demanded that the wise men of the kingdom tell him the dream and tell him the interpretation. No one could do that, so Nebuchadnezzar had ordered that all the wise men be killed. That tells us a lot about what kind of person Nebuchadnezzar was. I'm sure everyone was trying to find a place to hide from the wrath of this impetuous king. What did Daniel do? He exercised amazing faith in the situation. He went to the place of danger. He went to the king and asked for some time to get the answer. It would have been one thing to go to the king after he had gotten an answer from the Lord. That would have been risky enough. But even without an answer, he had so much faith in the Lord that he went to the king and told the king he would get him an answer. Of course, he then went to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and said "We gotta' pray." God heard their prayers, gave Daniel the answer in a vision, and all ended well.

If we are going to ask people to commit their lives to the Lord, then they need to see us trusting Him when the crisis comes. The crisis actually becomes part of the opportunity for testimony. Our trust in God before the eyes of others affirms our message. We have to be willing to step out and demonstrate our faith.

So these two components were in Daniel's strategy for evangelism.

I. Live a consecrated, consisted life before others.

II. Trust God's involvement and intervention when the challenges of life come.

Number 3, if we are to be effective in evangelism, we must:

II. Speak the truth respectfully, yet firmly.

It took courage for young Daniel to go to the chief eunuch and tell him that he did not want to defile himself with the king's delicacies. How would this man respond to the request? Would he say no and mistreat Daniel from then on for not being a team player? Would he report Daniel to the king as someone who cannot be trusted? If Daniel had never spoken up, he could not have successfully navigated the difficulty. He would have been herded along with the rest of the crowd.

When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream about the image, he verbally gave God the credit for the answer. Dan 2:27 *"Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. 28 But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: 29 As for you, O king, thoughts came to your mind while on your bed, about what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be."*

He used the opportunity to tell Nebuchadnezzar about God! He didn't just give him the interpretation. He pointed Nebuchadnezzar to the Lord. And he did that before he gave him the interpretation. Put yourself in Daniel's shoes for a moment. What if Daniel got it wrong? What if the king didn't think that was the right interpretation? Daniel had to exercise the faith to go

to the king before he had any answer. And now he has to trust God that the answer he has is the right answer. Everything we do and everything Daniel did had to be by faith. Don't read the story as if everything was easy for Daniel. He put it all on the line. And he told Nebuchadnezzar about the Lord. All of this impacted Nebuchadnezzar. Dan 2:47 *"The king answered Daniel, and said, 'Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.'" I don't think Nebuchadnezzar is making a personal consecration to the Lord here. But He is acknowledging the Lord and acknowledging the greatness of the Lord. His heart is beginning to open up to the Lord through Daniel's witness.*

Years later Nebuchadnezzar has this other dream about the tree that was cut down. When Daniel gave Nebuchadnezzar the interpretation of that dream, he courageously called Nebuchadnezzar to repentance. He told the king that he would be cut down to size. He would live like an animal for 7 years *"till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and give it to whomever He chooses."* Then Daniel called for a response from Nebuchadnezzar. Dan 4:27 *"Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity."* This is Daniel's altar call to Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar does not repent at that moment. He continues in his prideful behavior. One year later, the judgement came. Nebuchadnezzar snapped. For 7 years he lived like an animal. In the meantime, Daniel and others preserved his kingdom. At the end of that 7 years Nebuchadnezzar repented. He not only surrendered to the Lord himself, he wrote a tract giving testimony of how he had come to the Lord and sent that out for people to read throughout the Babylonian kingdom. So Daniel didn't just lead Nebuchadnezzar to the Lord, he sent testimony of the Lord throughout the kingdom through Nebuchadnezzar. Many, many people were impacted.

My third point is that when it's time to speak up, you have to speak up! Effective evangelism includes these three components, regardless of style. (1) you have to live your message (2) you have to trust God and act in fact when that is required (3) you have to speak. You have to tell people the message. Daniel later did that with King Belshazzar when he interpreted the writing on the wall. He later did that with King Darius as he came out of the lion's den. The result with Darius was much like that of Nebuchadnezzar. Dan 6:25-27 *"Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. 26 I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom men must tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, And steadfast forever; His kingdom is the one which shall not be destroyed, And His dominion shall endure to the end. 27 He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."*

Daniel didn't fill stadiums the way Philip might have done. He influenced the people around him. Some were kings, and they gave testimony of Daniel's God to multitudes. Evangelism is about influence. It happens through the way we live our daily lives before people. It happens when people see us step out in faith and believe God during the crisis. It happens when we tell others about the Lord, especially in the context of the previous two.

There are some Christians who want to go tell the message to others, but they don't even live it themselves. Their influence is limited. There are other Christians who think just living it is enough. No, there are points in time when we must speak up and say what we believe. Whether

it is politically correct or not, makes no difference. We are to “proclaim” the good news of Jesus Christ. Are you telling people about the Lord?

Pray