

1. Choices, Consequences, and Creativity – Part 1

When God created Adam, God created him so that he had great creativity. He was able to give names to all of the animals, even though he had never seen any of them before. Genesis 2:20 says, “So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.” However, Adam sinned. That choice changed his relationships with God, himself, and others. It also had five immediate consequences. Adam experienced separation from God. He had fear, guilt, and shame within. He immediately blamed his wife.

We also see that sin began to twist and destroy the creativity of mankind. Instead of people using their creativity to bring glory to God, we see that they used their creativity to discover more ways to do evil. Genesis 6:5 says, “Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Here, we see that all people thought about was evil. We still see creativity in children, but they usually begin to limit their creativity because of fear. We will look at how creativity affects choices and consequences.

In the book of Daniel, we see that Daniel and his three friends were taken as captives to the land of Babylon. There, they were placed under the supervision of the steward, Melzar (as recorded in KJV), to be trained to serve the king. Although Daniel was just a young man, he was a young man with a purpose in his life. Daniel 1:8 says, “But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.” Here, we see that Daniel had chosen to make it his purpose in life to bring glory to God.

Daniel made a choice to bring glory to God by what he ate and drank. Daniel 1:9-10 says, “Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs. And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, ‘I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who are your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king.’” The choice by Daniel to refuse to eat the food of the king and drink the wine of the king also forced Melzar to make a choice. Because he was controlled by fear, Melzar could only see two choices. His choices were to: make Daniel, and his friends, eat and drink what the king provided, or lose his head. He showed that he had lost his creativity, because he was acting out of fear.

In contrast, Daniel realized that there were other choices and showed his creativity by suggesting a third choice. He knew if he did what Melzar said, he would not bring glory to God. He also knew that if he rebelled, he, his three friends, and Melzar would all be killed, and that would not bring glory to God. Because Daniel was not controlled by fear, Daniel realized that he could use his God-given creativity and suggest a test to Melzar. He could have suggested a test lasting six months or a year since the training period was three years. However, Daniel suggested a test of only ten days, so God could use the test to bring glory to God.

Daniel 1:12-13 says, “Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat

and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants.” Melzar realized that he now had a third choice. A ten-day test would still leave him with two years and three hundred and fifty-five days, regardless of what happened in the test. He could make the choice to accept this third choice without having to be controlled by fear.

Daniel 1:14-16 tells us, “So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days. And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.” The God-given creativity Daniel was able to exercise, because he was not acting out of fear, caused Melzar to see the way God worked, and it brought glory to God.

God honored the purpose of heart demonstrated in the life of Daniel and his three friends. Daniel 1:17 says, “As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.” Here, we see that God honored the purpose of heart of Daniel and his three friends by giving them much greater understanding and creativity. When Christians are led by the love of Christ, instead of the fear of people, they will see the Lord give them much greater wisdom, understanding, and creativity.

After three years, all of the young men were presented to the king, so the king could question them and see how they had developed through the training process they had gone through. When the king questioned Daniel and his three friends, Daniel 1:20-21 says, “And in all matters of wisdom and understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers who were in all his realm. Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.” Here, we see the results of Daniel yielding his life to God so God could develop his wisdom, understanding, and creativity.

The fact that Daniel was able to exercise leadership until the first year of King Cyrus is a very significant statement. It meant that Daniel influenced two world empires – the Babylonian and Medo-Persian Empires. It also meant that this influence covered a period of nearly seventy-five years. This gave him many opportunities to bring glory to God, as well as influence the decisions of several world rulers. This was all made possible by the fact that he had purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king’s food. Because he did not fear the king, He could seek the wisdom of God for creative ideas which also allowed him to bring glory to God. He was led by the love of God, instead of being driven by the fear of people, including the king.

This is illustrated by a very familiar event in the life of Daniel. Many people are familiar with the story of Daniel in the lion's den, but not as many are familiar with the events leading up to that event. In 539 BC, the Medes conquered the city of Babylon and took control of the Babylonian Empire. At that point, Daniel had already been a leader with great influence in the Babylonian Empire for about seventy years, so he was probably at least ninety years old at the time the Medes conquered Babylon.

The Lord opened the door for Daniel to quickly begin to have influence with the Persian rulers. In Daniel 6:3, we read, “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.” Here, we see that Daniel still had that excellent spirit in him that gave him wisdom, understanding, and creativity, even though he was more than ninety years old. It was during this period of time that the Jews who chose to do so were allowed to return to the land of Israel under the leadership of Ezra. Daniel probably provided much of the influence that made this possible.

The influence that Daniel had, because of his wisdom and creativity, caused the other leaders to become jealous. Instead of taking the opportunity to learn from Daniel, and grow in wisdom and creativity themselves, these leaders decided to try to destroy Daniel, so they could get his position of influence. That was why they tricked the king into signing a decree which said no one could petition any other god or man, except the king, for thirty days. That decree did not stop Daniel from serving God, because he was not driven by the fear of people, but he was led by the love of God.

Daniel 6:10 says, “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.” With the windows wide open, Daniel continued to pray and make his petitions to God so that these jealous leaders could watch him and listen to him pray.

The jealous leaders had Daniel thrown into the lion’s den. Instead of being killed, the choice of Daniel brought glory to God. (Daniel probably even got to enjoy a nice soft lion pillow that night as he slept.) Two things happened as a result. First, the jealous leaders were thrown to the lions and the lions destroyed them. Second, the king wrote a new decree. Daniel 6:26-28 says, “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. 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. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.”

Daniel is an excellent example of the fact that wise choices lead to good consequences. Wise choices give Christians a great opportunity to develop our God-given creativity, so that the Lord can use that creativity to bring glory to God, as well as have a powerful influence in the world around us. May the Lord richly bless you as you help developing leaders grow in godly wisdom and understanding so that they are able to develop their God-given creativity in a way that will bring glory to God and have a powerful impact in the lives of others.