



DGM Message Title: The Turtle that Goes to Church

Concept: Take a Risk and make your life worth living!

Message Summary: Christianity means coming together as a team to strengthen one another to change the world through Jesus Christ. It includes pulling people in from the highways and byways of life. We may stick our heads out by daring to come to church, get hurt, and possibly get disappointed, but it is the only way for us to come together and live lives strong enough to bring glory and honor to Jesus' name.

Scriptural References:

- Daniel 1:1-16

Key Points:

- Daniel 1:1
 - The Pharaoh of Egypt had invaded Babylon and fought with Israel on the way to Babylon, but were totally wiped out by Babylonian army.
 - Typically, when a new power emerged, they would heavily tax you and new laws would be implemented.
- Daniel 1:2
 - God gave His people into the hands of a pagan king.
 - The onlookers thought that God failed to protect His people.
 - So, the prevailing thought was that the pagan god was stronger than the God of Israel.
 - But, Moses and the prophets had warned the children of Israel that if they kept wandering away from God that this would happen.
 - We are free to choose, but we are never free from the consequences of our choices!
 - God's justice was a consequence of Israel's moving away from Him.
 - ✓ God didn't enjoy it, and His heart with still with Israel, but their chosers brought about their circumstance.
 - ✓ God's consequences are rightful and true, but He weeps over the choices we make.

- Not only did the Babylonians take the land, but also some of the articles from the House of God to the house of their god.
 - Due to the unfaithfulness of Israel, the Babylonians were able to take some of the sacred items from God's Temple to their temple.
 - As a result, the Babylonians thought their god was more powerful.
 - ✓ Sometimes, we get into trouble and become captives, not because God wouldn't help, but because we wouldn't submit.
- Daniel 1:3-4
 - Nebuchadnezzar was trying to gain the loyalty of the next generation.
 - He offered them the best accommodations and the finest food.
 - The young men he chose were the gifted and brightest of those among the Israelites and the best looking and sharpest.
 - To be part of this group, you had to be a person of significant natural talent.
 - He chose them because he wanted them to honor and obey him.
 - Of all the young men chosen, Daniel was set apart by "integrity."
 - Any success without integrity is really a failure.
- Daniel 1:5
 - The young men were living the good life.
 - All this was done because the king was working on something in which to use these young men for.
 - Nothing in life is free; the enemy always has an angle.
- Daniel 1:6
 - All of their names in Hebrew included God.
 - Daniel means, "God is my judge."
 - Hananiah means, "Jehovah is gracious."
 - Mishael means, "Who is what God is."
 - Azariah means, "Jehovah is a helper."
 - **God is the only one in authority that can tell you who you are!**
- Daniel 1:7
 - The first thing Nebuchadnezzar tried to do was change their identities.
 - It's so easy to lose yourself, answering to names other people call you.
 - ✓ Daniel was given Belteshazzar; meaning old lady (wife of the god baal) protect the king.
 - ✓ to Hananiah, Shadrach; meaning, I'm fearful of the moon god.
 - ✓ to Mishael, Meshach; meaning, who is like the moon god.
 - ✓ to Azariah, Abed-Nego; meaning, servant of nebo or baal.
 - ✓ People can call you what they want, but what you answer to in your heart is really what matters.
- Daniel 1:8
 - People were trying to make Daniel into something that he wasn't.
 - He had heart. He purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's delicacies.
 - **Character is what you do, when you have every excuse not to.**

- Eating a meal was a covenant act, so to reject a meal was to reject covenant relationship or friendship – to reject that person.
- ***If we are ever cut off from God, it's only because we used the scissors.***
- Daniel 1:9
 - We can have principles without being obnoxious.
 - We can be right without being mean.
 - Daniel spent most of his life fighting from within the system.
 - The only time he was at odds with the system was when it was contrary to God's Word.
 - Every culture had good and bad in it, but when this culture opposed God, Daniel didn't compromise what God said.
 - How do you disagree with people without becoming disagreeable?
 - Be mindful of your tone.
 - ✓ It's not always what you say, but how you say it.
 - ✓ ***If your voice is raised because humiliating and demeaning people is part of who you are, you've got issues... But if raising your voice is because you care and it is part of who you are as a person and communicator, your employees should have the courtesy and professionalism to respect that – Michael Schrage***
 - ✓ Please have some passion and intensity.
 - Avoid "you" statements.
 - ✓ It's combative, stop making it personal.
 - ✓ Focus on the action you want.
 - Monitor your body language.
 - ✓ Rolling your eyes is not an answer.
 - ✓ Watch out for the personal space and using your finger.
 - Daniel was a captive, but he learned in his oppressive situation how to launch an appeal.
- Daniel 1:10-11
 - ***It's not the team with the best players that win, it's the players with the best team that win.***
 - The four Hebrew boys got on the same page.
 - Church is pulling together and connecting with others and sticking together until each player wins.
- Daniel 1:12
 - Daniel starts speaking with the word "Please."
 - We at times should watch how we address people.
 - ***What cannot be tested cannot be trusted.***
 - Initially the eunuch disagreed with Daniel's request
 - God knows how to make us more with less.
 - That is what a miracle is.
 - God's math is not like our math: anything plus God will always equal "MORE THAN ENOUGH."

- Daniel 1:13-14
 - Daniel was willing to be tested to allow the results to speak for themselves.
 - Daniel brought the people into the problem and provided them with a point at which they can make their own decision.
 - Real faith doesn't push everything off for later; it will impact the "right now."
 - It wasn't going to happen only for Daniel, but for all 4 Hebrew boys.
 - God allows blessing to impact congregations (more than 1 person) so the results will not be denied or refuted.
 - Leaders of congregations just don't get impacted, but the congregation as well, so no one can say it was just one person.
 - It will be undeniable that it was God.
- Daniel 1:15
 - God doesn't want you to look like everybody else, He wants you to look better than everybody else.
 - God desires each of us to say more than just words to a song: He is a Way-Maker, Miracle Worker, Promise Keeper, Light in the darkness.
 - You find that out by testing Him and seeing for yourself.
 - You read the Bible, hide it in your heart, and experience it.
 - When you taste and see that the Lord is good and prove Him in your own life, you are different from everybody else and cannot be easily persuaded or discouraged, because you know Him to be:
 - ✓ Savior
 - ✓ Healer
 - ✓ Faithful
 - The 4 Hebrew boys were willing to put their faith on the line and find out whether or not God could pull it off.
- Daniel 1:16
 - The meals that they were being given were presented to the Babylonian gods.
 - So, we have the 4 Hebrew boys being presented food dedicated to idols, but in testing them, the food was taken, and they were given vegetables instead.
 - If God's people would come together, maintain our distinctiveness, and stop trying to be like everybody else, God will show Himself strong.
 - We have to be true to what God has placed on the inside of us.
 - All church is, every Sunday, is a "holy huddle."
 - We live in a crazy world, where people are fighting us all around.
 - At church, we put arms around each other, encouraging and strengthening one another, with God calling the plays to move us down the field.
- Behold the Turtle.
 - She can't walk while hiding her head in the shell.
 - She only makes progress when she sticks her neck out.
- When we come to church to be around different people, with different problems, we are sticking our neck out.

- You can become hurt and be disappointed.
- But, Christianity is a contact sport and it takes a team.
- No matter how skilled or talented you are as a quarterback or running back, if you don't have everyone else in place, you will not get anywhere.
- So, church is us coming together as a team for the sake of Christ, to get this ball down the field, pass the opposition, and allow people from the highways and byways of life on our team to change the world through Jesus Christ.
- Church is not about a building or a pastor.
- Church is about us coming together and living lives strong enough to bring glory and honor to His name.
- ***The risk is worth taking when it gives you a life worth living.***
 - Even if you find that people do things a little bit sideways, it is still better than you trying to run the ball down the field by yourself.
 - We can find an excuse for not lining up and coming to church and wonder why we get hit so hard; we wonder why we are laying on the ground more times than not.
 - ✓ God left us the church.
 - ✓ As imperfect as it is, that is where He lives.
 - ✓ We are the Body of Christ and if we don't do it, God cannot do it!
 - ✓ Jesus is the head of the church, but can you imagine us, the body, being paralyzed? We would never be able to do the work.
 - ✓ Together we become strong.
 - ✓ Everybody's gift being brought and used together.
- ***Our private moments with God help enable us to be with people.***
 - If you have really been with God, then you will be able to be with people.
 - *The proof of the measure that you have been with God is the degree that you can be with annoying, difficult, contrary, sometimes even trifling people – that's what Jesus did!*
- Church is us trying to be like Jesus.
 - Trying to stay connected to other!