

Extraordinary Living: Lesson in Faith from Ordinary People

“Obedience Despite Harm”

Part 4

Intro: Have you ever done the right thing and experienced negative consequences for it? Have you ever followed Jesus and the immediate outcome wasn't a blessing?

- You told the truth and it damaged a relationship
- You didn't lie on your taxes and you ended up paying a lot of extra money.
- You didn't participate in your co-workers crude jokes and you got ridiculed.
- You chose to value your family over working 70 hr weeks, it cost you a promotion.
- You refused to have sex with your boyfriend and he broke up with you.
- You chose to be generous and now finances are really tight and stressful.

When the values of the world and the values of God's Kingdom clash, we are left with a choice; Will we still choose to be obedient or will we cave to the pressure to conform? Will we still follow Jesus even if obedience results in negative consequences? What will we do if obedience leads to the potential of harm in some way?

This was the same decision 3 young Hebrew men faced a long time ago. Their names were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

Summarize story: Daniel 3

1. If we follow Jesus the kingdoms will clash

Daniel 3:4-5 “Then a herald shouted out, “People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king’s command!”⁵ When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar’s gold statue.⁶ Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.” (NLT)

There was no way for obedient Jewish men not to have a clash with the godless culture of the Babylonians. It was inevitable. If we are going to follow Jesus fully in this life, it will be inevitable for us as well.

- Jesus warned His followers of this conflict

John 15:19 “The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you.” (NLT) Notice how Jesus reminds His followers of their identity? (Citizens of heaven.)

- Following Jesus ensures us we will experience a clash of kingdoms. There are times just like these three Hebrew men they functioned and blended in with the

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culture. Everyday wasn't a life and death situation. They had jobs within a godless culture.

- BUT, there were times when they no longer could be supportive. Having a job is one thing. Worshipping a gold statue was entirely another. Two opposing Kingdoms were clashing and they chose their loyalty.
- We are faced with the same choices. Jesus warned us that the world will hate us for aligning ourselves with His Kingdom. If you truly follow Me there will be conflict.

I Peter 4:12 "Dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you." (NLT)

- Kingdom conflict is normal. It is part of following Jesus fully. We shouldn't be surprised that we will face circumstances that will require us to make a choice that may not be very popular. Often, there is even a backlash for these choices.
- **Illustration:** When we go from believing in Jesus to following Jesus, not everyone will be overjoyed by your decision. Following Jesus means our values begin changing / how we invest our time / how we spend our money / our priorities / maybe even our choices in entertainment / possibly some relationships.
- Many of our family and friends just don't understand the change. It is a clash of Kingdoms.

*I Peter 4:4 "Of course, your former friends are **surprised** when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you." (NLT)*

- If we follow Jesus fully conflict will be inevitable. Some of you are living this right now. You have friends and even family members who just don't understand the changes taking place in your life.

- We must constantly remember which Kingdom we belong to

I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you."

- This is why understanding and embracing our identities is so essential in following Jesus in this fallen world. We must come to accept and identify with the new Kingdom we are part of. This is why I reference this issue so often. You and I cannot live beyond what we believe. Explain
- In order to follow Jesus even when the outcome may be negative, we must be very conscious of what Kingdom we belong to. Which Kingdom you identify with more will drive your decisions.
- 2 weeks ago, I gave you all the "Deadly Dozen" list. 12 "I am" statements. These statements all reflect identity.
- **Illustrate:** When you are in the US, you are rarely conscious of that fact. It's just not on your mind. BUT, when you are in another country, you become very aware of that fact. (Share about being in Guatemala – Customs / values / language / laws / are all different than the US. – Explain how car accidents are dealt with.)

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- Since we belong to God’s Kingdom, we are now foreigners in this earthly kingdom. We live in a country we do not belong to. This mentality is essential in order to follow Jesus.
- The three Hebrew men, knew who they were and what nation they belonged to and that created a clash of kingdoms.

2. The worldly kingdom demands conformity

Daniel 3:12 “But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.” (NLT)

Daniel 3:15 “I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made when you hear the sound of the musical instruments.^[1] But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace. And then what god will be able to rescue you from my power?” (NLT)

- The world demands we embrace it’s values

Just like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were told to conform, so are we. This world is constantly demanding we embrace and follow it’s values.

What values are those?

- The world basically has 3 main values it promotes and demands obedience to. This fallen world worships the pursuit of pleasure / possessions / pride – elevate self.

I John 2:15-16 “ Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you.¹⁶ For the world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.” (NLT)

- The Kingdom of God is completely opposite.
 - Deny yourself rather than indulge your pleasure.
 - Practice generosity rather than accumulation
 - Walk in humility rather than pride and self-exaltation
- We are bombarded by the world’s values daily. The world demands that we indulge pleasure in every form. In fact, if we don’t something is wrong with you. We should accumulate as much as we can at all costs. We should elevate the self-made man or woman. We worship successful people.
- The world will mock you for self-denial / generosity / humility.

- The world threatens punishment if we are in violation of it’s values

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- The world is constantly threatening “the church”. Because they hate the values and Kingdom we stand for, they are constantly threatening. Like how?
 - Threaten to remove the tax exempt status because of our values
 - Threaten to take legal action for discrimination in hiring
 - Threaten to make some parts to the bible illegal to preach
 - Threaten legal action against pastors who refuse to marry people
- Soon we are more worried about what the retribution from the world may be instead of obedience...instead of following Jesus.
- Some of you are facing choices like this. If you don't lie for your boss you will get fired. If you don't fudge the spread sheet a bit it may cost the company. If you don't lie a bit you won't close the sale. If you're not dishonest, you'll pay more taxes.
- We all feel the pressure and the threats from the world in a variety of ways. We feel that internal tension. We can all wonder at times what will happen if we don't conform.
- But God doesn't bless circumstantial obedience. What do I mean? We follow Jesus when the circumstances are convenient and we follow the world when the circumstances are hard. What do you do when the world makes it difficult to obey? What do we do in light of the threats?

3. The extraordinary is the result of obedience at all costs

I love how sold out these guys are.

Daniel 3:16-18 “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. ¹⁷ If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty. ¹⁸ But even if he doesn't, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.” (NLT)

I love the fact that their obedience was not based upon whether or not God was going to rescue them. “*Even if He does not...*” It wasn't based upon a favorable outcome.

- This type of obedience appears foolish to the world
 - Reckless obedience drives the world crazy. They simply can't handle it when the followers of Jesus refuse to conform. Just look at King Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to their refusal. They guy went ballistic!
 - I also love the fact that these guys didn't feel the need to defend themselves. Please stop trying to defend the values of the Kingdom to people who still belong to the world. Sometimes the best thing the followers of Jesus can do is just go silent and follow Jesus. Why?

*I Cor. 1:18 “The message of the cross is **foolish** to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God.” (NLT)*

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- There is a time and a place to speak up, but we must stop thinking we have to defend God or His Kingdom. I love the fact that these three guys said this to the King. “*O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you.*”
- I wish more believer’s in Jesus would stop working so hard trying to defend themselves and simply be quiet and follow Jesus. Stop trying to defend yourself on Facebook / social media. Stop all the religious posts.
- Looking foolish to the world is the norm if you’re going to follow Jesus. The extraordinary is the result of not caring what the world thinks and following Jesus anyway.

- This type of obedience releases the extraordinary in our world

“...it is the very power of God.”

- I am convinced that obedience releases power in the heavenlies. I’m not sure I fully understand it, but when God’s people simply follow in obedience and loyalty to Him, it marshals heaven’s armies. Something supernatural happens. The power of God is unleashed on to our world.
- In the story, one moment Nebuchadnezzar thought their obedience was foolishness and the next he is issuing a decree that everyone should worship their God. He was confronted by the power of God...the extraordinary.
- If we do not follow Jesus like this, we rob the world of seeing the real Jesus. We rob the world of seeing His power / His might / and His Kingdom. When we cave under the pressure of the world we forfeit the extraordinary.
- We don’t show the world the reality of Jesus through content. We have to stop talking at the world and instead show them the power of obedience. We choose to follow Jesus even when the world ridicules us for the apparent foolishness of our choices.
- The world understands power. When the world is confronted with the real power of God, it’s undeniable. The problem so often with the church is we would rather show the world programs instead of Kingdom power that comes from radical obedience.
- It is in recklessly abandoning ourselves to follow Jesus no matter what the cost where we see the power of God demonstrated in this world. Following Jesus fully is walking in obedience even when it does not personally benefit us.

I don’t know what issues you may be facing or how the world is demanding your loyalty, but today God is asking you to trust Him regardless. I know you may be worried about the consequences if you follow Jesus, but God’s provision is experienced through obedience.

How about this time, you choose to ignore the threats from the world and follow Jesus regardless. I’m not promising there will not be negative consequences. There are plenty of examples in God’s word where obedience brought some unpleasant responses from the world.

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BUT, if we only follow Jesus when it's easy, what does that say about our loyalty to Him? What does that say about the depth of our commitment to follow? How can we live an extraordinary life unless we follow no matter what the outcome?

Where have you allowed your fear of some negative consequence to stop you from following Jesus and values of His Kingdom? Where are you bowing to the idols of this world instead of saying; "I'm not bowing any longer!"

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