

060318 Courageous living in Turbulent Times... Today we start our new series *Courageous living in Turbulent Times...* is there really any other type of times?... for it often seems like we are either in turbulent times, coming out of a turbulent time or heading toward a turbulent time... the words turbulent time... as defined by the oxford dictionary means a time - characterized by conflict, disorder, or confusion; the opposite of stable or calm.

But the truth is we are not always in turbulent times... But it is in the non turbulent times that we learn how to handle the turbulent times... How you may ask does that happen? I happens this way... Courageous living is practiced in the calm and stable times... but is demonstrated in the turbulent times...

Jer 12:5 "If you have raced with men on foot and they have worn you out, how can you compete with horses? If you stumble in safe country, how will you manage in the thickets of the Jordan?"

- **In other words if one cannot live courageously in the everyday living with people life...**
- **how will they courageously live running with the horses when Life is rife with hurt, loss, disappointment, betrayal, pain, unexpected trouble and tragedy?**
- **Courageous people can be counted on when the going is rough.. for they could be counted on when the going was easy**
- **Courage is not about what you say or even what you start...it is obtained by how you handle crisis**
- **Courageous people keep moving in the face of major obstacles because they have learned to keep moving in the face of small obstacles**
- **Courageous people have learned to adapt and overcome what seem like insurmountable setbacks because they have learned to adapt and overcome normal setbacks..**
- **Courageous people keep their convictions in tragedy because they have learned to keep their convictions in prosperity....**

And how do you do this? it is a thing we call Character!

character is said to be "the stable and distinctive qualities built into an individual's life which determine his or her response regardless of circumstances."

1. **CHARACTER :is the behavior typical of a person it is your moral strength, moral strength is you ability to do right when you could easily do otherwise**
2. **Secondly our Character is our reputation...regardless of how we define ourselves. if your asked for a character reference is...you are asked to give input on their behavior..Character is the difference between intent and impact—**
3. **Here's one way to get a better understanding of what character really is. Thing of a person's "characteristics".**

4. What are the things that "characterize" a person? those attributes Taken together, are the things that make up his or her character.
5. How would you characterize yourself, for example? Are you a dependable person, or are you inconsistent? Are you determined, or do you tend to give up easily? Do you tend to be well organized. Are you humble, or prideful? even tempered or quick to anger... are you self controlled or emotionally controlled?
6. There are a lot of questions like these that we could ask about ourselves or others. When we know the answers to these questions, we can then say we have a pretty good understanding of the person's "character" because we know their "characteristics".

So, why is this important? Because Character is the number one determining factor in an individuals success ...it is the most important factor in whether or not they will be successful no matter what area of life we are talking about.- vocational, educational, relationships, financial, physical spiritual...for example, it is certainly easy to see that a person who is diligent is much more likely to have success that a person who is slothful.

When we have learned this truth...and have applied it enough to where it becomes our truth... our ability to handle life courageously greatly increases...

We have a great example in the Bible of Courageous living...a man named Daniel...

Daniel was a man of strong character, and had a deep love for God. He faced hardship and difficulties in life, but his destiny was transformed from a captive to a prince when he brought with him his developed character

So for the next few weeks we are going to use his life as a guide and template for learning the character traits that will make us people who make a difference for good in our generation ...people who influence the world around them by their courageous living in Turbulent times...

to begin we must go back in History 2600 years ..to a most turbulent time for the nation of Israel...From about 750 BC to 626BC the middle East was dominated by the **Assyrian empire**. But on November 22, 626BC Babylonian General Nabpolasser (Nebuchadnezzar's father) wrested control of Babylonia away from the Assyrians.

Becoming the first independent Babylonian King. Later he formed a military alliance with Media Persia, and in 612BC destroyed the capital city of Assyria (Ninevah) and Babylon became the strongest single kingdom in the Middle East, Thus ushering in the beginning of the Babylonian Kingdom.

Babylon means "babilu" (gate of god). It is an ancient city about 50 miles south of Modern Baghdad Iraq. Babylon was founded by Nimrod of Gen. 10, who developed the world's first organized system of idolatry, which God condemned (Gen. 11). It later became the capital of Babylonia and the Babylonian Empire.

Upon his father's death in 606BC Nebuchadnezzar his eldest son ascended to kingship... **Nebuchadnezzar. Means "May (the god) Nabu protect the son,"** or "May Nabu protect the boundary."

In 605 BC King Nebuchadnezzar from Babylon consciously pursued a policy of expanding the Babylonian Kingdom, **claiming He was granted universal kingship by Marduk the chief god of his land...and praying to have "no opponent from horizon to sky."**

He defeated Egypt and attacked Jerusalem in the land of Judah...prior to this Judah had lived for hundreds of years, a descendant of David had been on the throne in Jerusalem—well, besides one impostor queen (2 Ki 11:1–3). In 605 B.C., the dynasty was in its twilight years.

The story begins when Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon successfully besieges Jerusalem. He breaks in, conquers the city, and captures the king and carries off some of the sacred vessels and treasure from the temple of God to Babylon.

lets pick up the narrative...

DA 1:1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. ² And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god.

- **But that's not all he takes. Nebuchadnezzar also captures some young men of the royal family with him to serve him in his court. Daniel is one of them, he is no more than 18 years old and is a direct descendent of David...**
- **He grew up knowing of the exploits of this King and his spiritual heart and connection to God...and his numerous failings...all things he would take in his formation during the good times...but now it all changes**

*DA 1:3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring in some of the Israelites from the **royal family and the nobility**-- ⁴ young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace.... He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. ⁵ The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. **They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.** ^{DA 1:6} Among these were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.*

- Daniel was one of the men King Nebuchadnezzar took as a slave....and three more are named... These four men grew up as nobility and members of the royal family...

So the question is Why did King Nebuchadnezzar take these four men and other nobility as prisoners and not just kill them as threats to His throne?

- **Nebuchadnezzar was genius...He** knew it is easier to govern a conquered country if you gave them a little autonomy to carry on life as usual ...not much but some...rebellion would be minimized...
- **And if you imprisoned** some young nobles, some close relatives of the now puppet king from these conquered countries a system that came to be known as "The Royal Hostages" you had added incentive for compliance..
- The Royal hostages would live well in Nebuchadnezzar's royal court...as long as the King pays the yearly taxes...if he refuse...they could die..
- **But there are other useful reasons Nebuchadnezzar did this...**
 1. A foreign noble was could be a very useful employee/prisoner...He would know the history and language, customs and laws...and culture of his home country..useful knowledge
 2. He would know the religions and gods they serve and perhaps these gods would help the Babylonians
 3. He could offer insight and political advice to the King, providing a better understanding of how to govern them...
 4. And the Babylonians would teach these Hostages on the customs, laws and religion of Babylonia with the intent to more easily export them to their country of origin to be assimilated.
 5. So they would look for the best and brightest...young noblemen.. putting them through 3 years education and training and Then testing them...failure could cost them and their teachers their life....minimum three languages...Hebrew, Aramaic, and akkadian the language of the priests...who were also the politicians
 6. Upon graduation placing them in his group of wise men/advisors.

There are a few character traits/ disciplines that have to be possessed in order to navigate successfully such a drastic and turbulent life change these teens were forced into...

These four young men...not more than 18 years old...have had their whole life shaken...they went from nobility to a foreigner...who did not speak the language... a have to a have not.. from powerful to powerless...from freedom to prisoner

*******What did Daniel need to possess character wise to stand up under this devastating change of fortune...this turbulent time?**

It is the same character trait we need to face the inevitable changes and turbulent times of life we all go through COURAGE!!

But Courage is not a stand alone Character trait...it is a combination of other character traits.....

*****And we are given some of them in verse four...the King wanted a certain type of Royal Hostage... young men who already had developed character... proven young men!**

⁴ *young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace*

- **No physical defect... normally we think of not having physical defects as a positive...but in this case it is a negative...if he would have had one he could have stayed home with his family... but now it is a hindrance and puts him in the positive of the first criteria...to be taken hostage...this is not really his choice it was God's way of putting him where he wants him.**

1. So the first character quality needed to live courageously is to know God is in control....he gave you the body you inhabit ...it is yours by design...it has been picked out by God...some things you will not have control over...only God

2. Which takes us to the second character quality...self care! they were Handsome!....handsome has the idea of self care...if you are going to weather successfully the turbulent times your body has to be strong enough to withstand the enormous stresses that come with turbulent times.....the fears, anxiety, stress, hurt, grief, loss, confusion, rejection, disappointment that always accompany these times...if we do not take care of our bodies during the good times we are setting ourselves up for additional and often unnecessary secondary troubles...

3. to be successful it is vital we nurture the character quality of being teachable.. being teachable is knowing that your current abilities, knowledge and experience are not enough to get you through this new turbulent time...you need to have already in your life aptitude which is a desire to grow already demonstrated

verse 4.....*showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand,*

- **showing aptitude... means capacity or ability to size up a situation..to be able to grasp the bigger picture...there is more going on then they know...they need to grow in knowledge and are used to asking for help...so they are listeners and learners**
- **which makes them well informed... they have learned a lot avbout a lot...people who can handle well that which used to baffle them...**
- **making them quick to understand what to do, how to act, what to say or not say...this is the way they do life...!**

These young men were experiencing the most turbulent storm of their young lives...everything has changed... and it will get worse...as the Babylonians not only have taken them hostage...they want to steal to steal their identities as members of Jewish Nobility and followers of Yahweh...by changing their names to Babylonian names and demanding they live like the Babylonians....

Dan 1:7 The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.

- when we are hit by turbulent times ...our identity is often rocked...who we thought we were gets challenged..how we thought things would work out get challenged..if we are not settled in who i am no matter what...what i stand on no matter what...who i belong too no matter what... i will be overcome by turbulent times or Iwill overcome turbulent times...

1:8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way.

- He resolved...he was committed...this also means some of the other Jewish captives did not resolve to not defile themselves...
- **besides everything I have shared with you today...the number one character trait...is honor God!** this did not come out of the blue... like all of a sudden he got tight with God! He was tight with God!
- Daniels practice in the good times ...praying three times a day, fasting and eating the prescribed diet God had given the Israelites...it was his inner most conviction to honor God in this way...regardless of circumstances... he used the foremost character trait...God first always!
- But notice he asked the permission of the chief official...he showed aptitude... **aptitude...capacity, to size up a situation.. ...someone who knows they don't know how to handle eveything and has a habit of asking for help...listening ...learning...**
- **First he asked God to help him honor God**
- **Second he asked the chief to help him honor his God...** He was courteous...he showed proper respect...he attempted first to explain the ways of his people... and he got it...

⁹ Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel, ¹⁰ but the official told Daniel, “I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your^[c] food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.” the chief listened with compassion....but was afraid for his life if he granted this favor...and it harmed these guys...this would have not only his life...but cause political ramifications...

- Daniel understood ...practicing **being well informed... which made him quick to understand**
- **lets try it for a short time...and see what happens..he says...**

¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

- **God honors us when we honor him...now remember he is still a captive and will be for the next 70 years...God did not change that...for keeping them captive was part of his greater purpose...**
- **but using these men as a testimony to the chief of his presence in their lives... he honored them...**

¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

- **and then rewards them...for their heart to honor God right now... with further knowledge and wisdom..while they still are captives...**

¹⁷ To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.

- **he increased their abilities in all these areas and even in the understanding of the subconscious and supernatural...**
 - **not even that much for their benefit but for His purposes...listen your character is not to help you cruise through life but to enable you to be used to carry out the purposes of God in your life!**
 - **but character is developed in the good times...and in the turbulent times it is displayed...so if you are in the good times...be resolved to honor God...and in the turbulent times take note of your character and what needs to be worked on ...**
- end**