

**Sermon Transcript from August 7th, 2016
Resilience and Resistance
Pastor Dave Lomas, Reality San Francisco**

We've been in a year-long initiative called The Year of Biblical Literacy where we've been taking on this really daunting task of reading through the Bible and talking about it as we read through it in our community groups and also talking about what we've been learning on Sunday through these kind of heavy, big chunks of series' that we've been doing throughout the year. And guys, we're almost into the New Testament. Are you excited about the New Testament? Yes. Everyone said, "Amen. Thank You, Jesus, for the New Testament."

So, we're almost there. Some of you guys are like, "I was kind of already there. I'm not going to lie. I skipped ahead. Like, I'm going to John because I understand John."

So, if that was you, stay there. That's fine. We'll be there. We'll catch up to you soon enough. But, everyone else, we're almost done. Last week, we finished and we read through the book of Daniel. Like I said, we started a series – a very important series, I think, kicking off the end of our summer when everyone's kind of coming back from holiday and vacation and new people kind of move into the city during this time of the year. It's their first little taste of living in San Francisco after they've finished university or grad school or whatever and they get their first job in San Francisco. This is where you go to work. So, we usually, this time of the year, try to teach a sermon series on the city and how to live into the city. How do we live into this city, San Francisco, in our cultural moment? And our friend, John Tyson, from Trinity Grace Church in New York City, kicked us off and did an incredible job squeezing so much content into 35 minutes. I have no idea how he did it. He talks really, really fast. So, you might need to go back and listen to the podcast on slow motion to get what he was doing.

But, John taught a series of sermons on Daniel last year at his church and they've really inspired this series and he was kind enough to frame up the series on being a creative minority. And I really do encourage you to get the podcast. So, here's the definition of a creative minority that he left us with last week. So, I'll start there and we'll pray and we'll get into today. So, he said this. This is how he defined a creative minority. He summed up his teaching like this last week:

"A creative minority is a Christian community in a web of stubbornly loyal relationships, knotted together in a living network of persons in a complex and challenging cultural setting who are committed to practicing the way of Jesus together for the renewal of the world."

That is so good. A creative minority is a Christian community, a church, in a web of stubbornly loyal relationships. We're so committed to each other that you could almost call us stubborn in the way that we just won't untangle from each other. Knotted together in a living network of persons. We don't just show up for church on Sunday. We have a living network of people that live together and life rhythm together. In a complex and challenging cultural setting. That's our city. Who are committed – why are we doing all this? Because we're committed to practicing the way of Jesus together for the renewal of the world.

So today, we are looking at Daniel 1, as Carrie just read for us. And I want to focus our time this morning on verse 8 where it says, **"But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine."**

"But Daniel resolved."

Let's pray.

Lord, I thank You for this church community. Just in traveling I'm always reminded how much I love the unique thing that You're doing in this community in this time in history. I'm really thankful for those that are practicing the way of Christ together in this city at this time. I pray today You'd teach us, Lord. I ask, God, that You would spur us on to love You more, to passionately pursue You, to love each other well. All these things that can be coming out of our mouth sound very cliché, but they're very hard to do. We need Your strength. Spirit, we need You to lead us, we need You to inspire us; those that just feel dead or just worn out or so overtaken by the intoxication of San Francisco. We need to be shaken awake. We need to be arrested again to the high call of Christ.

So, awaken us to that by Your Spirit. Teach us, this morning, and change us. We don't want to leave the same, God. I pray that You would use my words, God. I could speak to

people's ears, but only You can change hearts. So, I completely rely on You to do that. So, go before us, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen.

A couple months ago, a friend of mine sent me a book he found during his travels. He's a set designer in Hollywood, so when he travels he has to pop into obscure stores and look for things for movies, sets and whatever. He came across this old book from the 1950s about San Francisco. He sent it to me. It's called "The Crusade at Golden Gate." Here's a picture of the book. That, on the front, if you didn't know, is Billy Graham in clip art. He wasn't that big, you know? And the Golden Gate wasn't that small. So, that's obviously edited. But, he sent me this book. I've read a lot about this city. I've kind of spent the last eight years of my life studying San Francisco both as a pastor and someone who just really loves the culture of San Francisco.

But, you know what – and this is ignorance on my part – I never knew that Billy Graham had a crusade in San Francisco. He had a crusade here in 1958. From April 27th to June 22nd in 1958, Billy Graham had a very large crusade. The center of it was right across the street from our church offices. There was a ballpark right there were the San Francisco Seals used to play, and that's where they met. Crazy. Anyway, I'm reading this and a writer for the SF Examiner at the time, who was also a minister, wrote a book about the crusade and this is the book here.

The opening chapter of the book is called "The Place." He's talking about the place. San Francisco. What is the spiritual climate of San Francisco? What's it like to be a Christian in San Francisco? What's it like to be a church in San Francisco up against the culture of San Francisco? What is it like? What does it feel like to be a Christian? And remember: this is 1958. This is the 50s. This is what he writes:

"Nearly every other sizable city in America has been born out of a strong Christian witness which has helped to shape the city's character. One thinks of John Cotton in early Boston, William Penn in Philadelphia, Peter..." – that guy – "...in New York."

No one knows how to say his last name.

"Lord Baltimore in Baltimore, Dwight. L. Moody in Chicago, to name only a few. No matter how perverse the elements that later crept in, our American cities by and large have never been able completely to shake off their heritage. But, San Francisco has never known that kind of ordered Christian conscience. Thus, St. Francis gave his name, but never his spirit, to the brawling young city. The church has not been arranged on the side of the Gospel against its environment. Too often it has been quietly absorbed by its environment."

Let me read that sentence again, because I really messed it up.

"The church has not been arranged on the side of the Gospel against its environment. Too often it has been quietly absorbed by its environment. Thus, one honest, present-day minister of a large city church has suggested that what the pastors have done for San Francisco may not be as significant as what San Francisco has done to the pastors."

Are you kidding me? This is 1950 San Francisco. This is before the sexual revolution of the 60s in the San Francisco. This was before Anton LaVey started the Church of Satan in San Francisco. This is before Jim Jones in Jonestown. This is when San Francisco was kind of innocent. If you've ever read the book "Season of the Witch," this is kind of where the book starts. And it doesn't even get interesting until the 60s. This is like Mayberry, San Francisco. 1950s. And he's saying this. If that was then, how much more now is the church seduced in this city to be quietly absorbed by its environment?

You feel it. I know you feel it if you've lived here long enough. I know you feel that pressure in this city. How much does this city push on you and press on you morally, ethically, politically, emotionally and sexually? I would bet if you've lived in San Francisco for over five years, most of your views on things have changed. Some for better, hopefully, but a lot of us, we know, not for better. You might find yourself doing things or believing things that you would never have believed or done just five years ago or just ten years ago. Like he writes:

"Quietly absorbed by its environment."

That is so haunting. This is what happens. And if that was then, how much more today

are pastors prone to be changed by the city rather than to change the city? By the way, I feel this one. I feel this one personally. I feel this in my gut and in my bones. I know this temptation very well. It is so hard to fight this. I promise you. As a minister in this city, it is so hard to try to change the city more than it changes you. It is a fight all the time. If anyone knew this kind of pressure to be quietly and quickly absorbed by his environment, it was Daniel. If we're to learn from anyone how not to be absorbed but actually to shape and have influence in our environment, or as Tyson put it last week, a creative minority. It's learning from Daniel. We have to learn from Daniel.

So, let's look at Daniel 1. I just wanted to learn how in the world do we, as followers of God if you are here this morning – and I apologize. This sermon's going to be a little bit biased if you are a follower of Jesus. This is kind of the setting of this book. There are other sermons that we've done if you're not a follower of Jesus and you're really curious about following the way of Christ. We have. A bunch of sermons I can point you to that we've talked about.

But today, I really want to specifically talk about if you are a follower of Christ living in San Francisco, how in the world do you do it without being subtly absorbed into this environment where you're not distinct, that you're not even really, for all intents and purposes you're not a Christian anymore. How in the world do you do that?

So, let's look at Daniel 1. Three movements. These are not creative. Cut me some slack. My first week back. Okay? So, here it is. Three movements. These are like literally elementary. But, it is what it is. What happened to Daniel, what Daniel did about it and some implications. I told you. It's not good, but it's going to get us through today.

So, what happened to Daniel? Look at verses 1 and 2. It says, **"In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah,"** – he was not a good king at all, by the way – **"Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it."**

And ransacked it and leveled it. And it says in the next sentence, this is a very strange way of wording such a tragic event.

"And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand."

The Lord delivered, it says, **"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."**

What's going on here? Well, first let's remember we've been learning this over the last year – this calendar year – that God has called Israel to be His covenant people. He's called Abraham out and said, "I'm going to make you a people so that you could be a light to the nations. And, as you are a light to the nations, a light to the world, I'm going to bless the whole world through you. But, you have to be in covenant partnership with me. You have to live separate than the world. And then you're going to be a light to the world."

But, the people of Israel have stubbornly refused year over year, generation after generation. It goes from bad to worse to bad to some reform but to bad again and some reform and bad again. They've over and over again turned to idolatry; the worship of other gods. They've turned, over and over again, to injustice of the poor and the foreigner and the exile. And, as they've done these things, God is going to judge them. And after hundreds and hundreds of years of God warning Israel over and over again, "If you don't stop, I will judge you. If you do not stop, I will bring you into exile."

Finally, God says, "Enough is enough." And God removes His hand of protection and Israel is sacked by Babylon, destroyed and drug into exile. And exile is the context for this whole book. And the opening line says, "The Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into Nebuchadnezzar's hand."

This is very strange, by the way. This is actually, if you take notes in your Bible or are taking notes, you can write that. When it says, in verse 2, that the Lord delivered, this is actually an act of God's faithfulness. When it says, "The Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah and Jerusalem to Nebuchadnezzar," this is an act of God's faithfulness. Now, why do I say this is an act of God's faithfulness? Because Israel was disobedient. And, year after year for decades, God was saying He would do this. "If you did not repent, I would act decisively to discipline you and purify you," and God was faithful to His promise.

We tend to think of God's faithfulness in more positive terms, don't we? God is faithful. He'll never leave us. But, we don't often think of the negative terms of faithfulness, and God is faithful to also the negative terms as well. Like when God says, "If you abide in me, I will prune you."

You're like, "Whoa. That doesn't sound good."

God's faithful to do that in your life. He is faithful to cut you back so that you can have better fruit in your life. That's a promise of God. But, it doesn't feel good when God is faithful to that promise. When God is faithful to the promise of pruning you, it doesn't feel good. But, God is faithful to that promise. Or the promise to discipline you like a good father. That's a promise in the book of Hebrews. That God is a good Father; you are His child. You are not illegitimate. You're a legitimate child. So, God will discipline you. No one likes that form of God's faithfulness. No one says, "God, be faithful and discipline me."

We don't sing those songs. No worship leaders write that song. They should, but no one does. And we wouldn't sing it. We wouldn't buy it; we wouldn't sing it. We'd play it once. No one would sing that song. Like, I'm not singing that song. But, this is true. We don't. But, this is a negative side to God's faithfulness. But, it's still God's faithfulness. It's a part of God's character that He is faithful to. He is faithful to discipline us. He is faithful to prune us. So, it may be hidden at first sight, but the book of Daniel starts with God's faithfulness. "The Lord delivered." God was faithful to do what He said He was going to do.

Then there's this whole thing about the temple getting sacked and all the idols are taken from the temple and brought into the temple of Babylonia. This is almost like "our god beat up your god. Our god is greater than your god so we destroyed your temple and we took your god's stuff and we put them into our temple. Our god is greater than your god."

I think this is so interesting. This is like a very humiliating thing to happen to Yahweh; to God. And God allows it. The centerpiece of your activity on earth, to allow it to be destroyed and allow it to be plundered and allow your people to be carried off in exile so that you can purify them, so that you can show yourself faithful to them, is humiliating. But, this is what God does. But, not only does Babylon take stuff, Babylon takes people.

Because it says in verse 3 and 4, **"Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility."**

So, not only do they cart away stuff, they carted away people and they were looking for a certain kind of person. Look at who they're looking for. They said, "Ashpenaz, we're looking for young men without any physical defect, handsome," – so, basically perfect. Right? – "showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace."

These people were like the tributes that were bred and volunteered for The Hunger Games. Like, those people that are bred for this thing. Like, these are the kind of people that they were. And then it says, at the end, he was to teach them the language and the literature of the Babylonians. So, they were to cart off – and this is where Daniel comes into the story because Daniel and his three friends are some of the best of the best of Jerusalem and they're taken away from Jerusalem and brought into Babylon. They take him into Babylon and they take him into the king's service, and this is where the social engineering begins. This is where an intensive cultural immersion program to turn them from foreigners into insiders happens.

They had a new language. They were taught a new language. They were given a new education. They were given new clothes. They were given a new diet. They were given new names. Names, in ancient Israel, weren't just names. People didn't just look up baby names and ones that were popular but not many people had them and like, "That's what my kid's name's going to be."

These were identity statements. They were even prophetic. So, when someone was named in ancient Israel, it was like prophetic over them and they were also testimonies. So, the character of God. When you said your name or someone called you by your name, it didn't just say something about you, it said something about your god. So, Daniel's name is "God is my judge." That not only was who Daniel was, Daniel's like, "I'm going to live for God because God is my judge. I live for an audience of one."

Not only did it mean that to Daniel, not only was that an identity statement over him, but

it also said something that God is judge. It something about God and it said something about him. So, when they changed their names to Babylonian names – and his name was changed to Belteshazzar – they didn't just change it to some random name. Just like, "Uh, Daniel's hard to pronounce for us so we're just going to change your name to something simple. Like Bob, or whatever."

You know? They didn't just change their names. "Daniel" meant something and they didn't go, "Your name is now 'River.'"

"Well, what does your name mean?"

Like, some hippy name like "river."

"What does your name mean?"

"Well, it means like a body of water that goes from mountain to ocean," or something like that. You're like, "That doesn't make any sense."

They didn't just name him a random name. They named him "Belteshazzar," which means "treasurer of Baal," or treasurer of one of their gods. So, it was like a slap in the face. "No longer will you have this identity over you that this is your name. Your name is now this."

Not only did all of this happen to them, even more than that. Many scholars and historians believe that they were likely made eunuchs. If you don't know what a eunuch is, it's basically you are castrated so you're not a threat to the king's harem or not a threat to his wives.

I had a friend of mine who was – this is one of my favorite stories. I've been waiting like seven years to tell you this story. He told me this story years ago that he was a youth pastor and these kids came to faith in Christ and they were all running a marathon. They didn't know what to name themselves. They had to come up with a team name. So, they were just Christians and they started reading the Bible and they found this word in the Bible. "Eunuchs."

They're like, "That name sounds really cool. We're the Eunuchs."

So, they had shirts made that said "Eunuchs" on them and they ran this race and they showed up to church the next day with the shirts. He's like, "What in the world is that?"

They're like, "Oh, we're representing Jesus. This word comes from the Bible."

"I don't think that word means what you think it means. I don't. Do you know what that word means?"

They're like, "No. We just found it in the Bible. We thought it was an awesome word."

Just in case you didn't know what that word meant, that's what it means. So, a lot of people think that that's what happened. So, literally everything. Their future was taken from them; their past was taken from them. And then, not just erased, but coated over. Like, you're going to learn a new language now, a new education, a new way of living. Everything. This is the setup for the whole book right here. These four Jewish teenagers are taken from their homeland; a place where they were set apart as the people of God and called to be faithful to God alone. And they lived and breathed this every single day in Jerusalem. They would eat this way and dress this way and act this way and they would have it on the front of their mind. The way that they walked, the way they Sabbath, the way that they lived.

Everything was to be devoted to Yahweh; to God. And they were ripped from that and they were torn from their roots and their homes and they were isolated and taken to Babylon where they were immediately brought under the pressure to become Babylonian. They were no longer Jewish. They were to lose their Jewishness. They were to lose their distinctiveness. They were to lose it all and become Babylonian. The hope would be that they would assimilate into Babylonian culture, that you wouldn't even know why they acted or reacted or made decisions or why they influenced others in a Jewish way of life anymore. All that was erased.

The way they acted wasn't Jewish, the way they reacted wasn't Jewish, the way that they made decisions or the way they influenced others. It was all to be erased. So, next

slide. The question the book raises is "how do you live and even succeed in a progressive and competing environment as you remain faithful to your calling and distinctiveness as a follower of God?"

This is the setup for the whole book right here. The question that this whole book raises is "how do you live and even succeed..." – because Daniel and his friends succeeded – "...in a progressive and competing environment as you remain faithful to your calling and distinctiveness as a follower of God?"

How could these four famous young men have gained such success in a pagan court without being tainted by it? How can you gain success in this world of capitalism and image and politics and consumerism without being tainted by it? This is resilience, this is what it means to be resilient. How do you become resilient? How in the world do you compete in San Francisco and have success in San Francisco that's ran on image and politics and capitalism and consumerism and technology? How do you do that without being so destroyed by it that you're no longer distinct as a follower of God anymore? There is nothing that separates you from anyone else at all. Maybe what you do on a Sunday morning for an hour and a half. Maybe that, but that's about it. And maybe that maybe twice a month. Other than that, nothing is different. How do you maintain resilience?

So, what did Daniel do? Daniel 1:5, it says, **"The king assigned to 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 into the king's service."**

Daniel 1:8. This is the hinge of the entire book right here: **"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."**

"But Daniel resolved." What Daniel did here as a teenager – he was a teenager, by the way. He was somewhere between the ages of probably 14 and 18. What Daniel did here as a teenager had effects on his life when he was over 70 years old still living in Babylon. What he did right here, right at this moment, allowed him to chart a course to be faithful to God in Babylon for over 70 years.

What did he do? What's going on? Part of the Babylonian cultural immersion project was to eat food and wine from the king's table. And I promise you this was really good food and wine. This was very, very good. This is like subtly brilliant, right here. This cultural immersion project that Babylon came up with was subtly brilliant. We imbibe culture through its food and drink. We imbibe a culture through its food and drink. If any one of your friends has ever asked you who live in San Francisco when they're here to visit what to do, most of your list will be things you eat and drink.

Like, "Hey, what do I do in San Francisco?"

And you give them lists of places to eat and drink. Ash and I were just in Paris. And what I mean by "we were in Paris" is that we ate our way through Paris. And when you ask anyone, "Just give us a list of Paris," most of the places were places to eat. "Eat here and go here." Imagine if we went through Paris and didn't eat a thing. If we borough our own Kind bars the whole time and just ate those. You would go, "You did not go to Paris. I'm sorry. You did not do it."

We imbibe, we take in a culture through its food. It's called "soft influence." It's subtle. It's powerful. Before you know it, you want to live in Paris at a cafe smoking cigarettes all day. You just want to do that for life. You just imbibe it. Like, "That's all I want to do. That's it. That's all I want to do in life. I'm okay with not doing anything else in life."

You take in its culture through its food and its drink. That's how you imbibe a culture. This is where we literally take in culture. Right? I mean, you take it into your body. You ingest it. It becomes a part of you. But Daniel, it says, resolved not to defile himself this way. Now, why didn't he eat the food? Of all the places to stop, why food? I might have stopped with clothes, but not food. "I'm going to eat your food, but I'm just not going to wear that. Like, your food looks good, but your clothes don't look good."

Why did he stop with food? Why did Daniel say, "I'm not going to defile myself with food?" Well, some people think it was because the food was sacrificed to idols. That's true. But, probably so were the vegetables he got instead. So, that kind of doesn't hold that much water. It was probably all of it. All the food there was sacrificed to idols. Some people say it wasn't kosher. Well, maybe. But, wine was kosher and he said no to the wine as well. Whatever the case is here, food for Daniel is the sticking point. Food, for Daniel, is where he draws

a line. He knows, Daniel knows – and this is what takes immense amounts of wisdom, this takes immense amounts of willpower and strength and dependence on God. He knows that food is where he would be compromising his devotion to God.

All of these things he would take on. He would take on a new language, he would take on new clothes, he would take on a new rhythm of life, he would take all of that. But, food is where he said, "No. If I do this, I will lose it all here. And I will not lose my faith. I will not lose my distinctiveness. I will not stop being me. I am Daniel; someone where God is my judge and I will stand before God."

One commentator writes this:

"Accepting the palace provision involved a compromise of faith in a way that accepting a share in its life, its work, its education and its names do not. Believers, in other contexts or in other cultures, might have identified their sticking point elsewhere. The point is that the line should be drawn somewhere. Total assimilation is to be avoided."

The point is for Daniel that he said in his heart, "If I take the food, it's over for me." And Daniel had to make a move where if he was going to live a life faithful to God in Babylon – see, that was his point. That was his hope. "As I live in Babylon, I'm going to remain faithful to God." He had to do something where all his dependence was still on God. And if God didn't act and if God didn't move, he was stuck; he was lost. He had to make a decisive move. Like, "Okay. I'm in a place where I can completely receive this culture and be so influenced by this culture that I've lost all of my distinctiveness. I have to draw the line somewhere and I have to draw the line in a place where it's going to force me to be dependent on God and in a place where, if God doesn't act, I'm toast. If God doesn't act, I'm done."

So, what does he do? He decides to be a vegan. Now, if you're already vegan, you're almost there. I mean, you're close. You're like, "I knew it. I got it."

Now, being a vegan is great. But, if you're training – physically training – it's probably not the best thing. Now, some of you are like, "Oh, no, no. I beg to differ. Vegan protein shakes and kale."

No, no, no. They didn't have that. They didn't have Vitamix's then. Okay? Think "leaks." He lived off leaks. Think that. Don't think all the exotic protein packed vegetables that you eat today. He lived off of something like leaks. And to be strong while eating vegetables in this culture at this time, Daniel had to rely on God for his training. During this three-year period of living off of vegetables, he had to rely on God for his strength. He had to rely on God for his physical capacity. And God had to intervene or he was done. And when he rolled out the plan to Ashpenaz – because Ashpenaz said, "We're giving you all this stuff and then you're going to eat from this food."

And Daniel said, "Okay. This is where I draw the line. Ashpenaz, I can't eat from that table."

Ashpenaz was shocked. He was puzzled. To Ashpenaz, who was overseeing his training, Ashpenaz knew no other way to be strong or to look good than by eating food supplied by the king. To Ashpenaz, when Daniel said, "No, I'm not going to eat the food. Maybe just vegetables," he's like, "Wait, wait, wait. You're saying that you're not going to eat from the king's table and the whole point of this is at the end of this three years that you're strong and that you're smart. Because you're going to go into the service of the king. So, you have to be strong and you have to be smart. I don't know any other way for you to be strong and good looking and smart than by eating from the food the king supplies."

And Daniel goes, "There's actually another way. There's another way and I want you to try me. There's another way and it's really me being reliant on my God. It's not being dependent on the king of Babylon, but the king of the world. I can be dependent on God and I can trust God and I can trust God for my strength and I can trust God for my physical appearance and I can trust God for my education. Just let me have this."

And Ashpenaz doesn't really want to do it, but Daniel says, "Just do a controlled trial. Just a couple week period and just see."

And Ashpenaz agrees to this controlled trial and then the result is this. Daniel 1:15-17: **"At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who at the royal food."**

They looked better and healthier.

"So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. To these four young men God gave..."

To these four young men who did this, God says, "I will not be out-given. You've given your devotion to me. I'm going to devote myself to you. I'm going to give you knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning."

"And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds."

By this moment that happened with Daniel, this decisive action. Okay. That's what went on. Then, eventually, he's presented to King Nebuchadnezzar and there's no one better. There was no one better than Daniel and his friends. No one. So, that's the story. That's what went on in Daniel 1. What are some implications that we can draw from this?

Notice that in this story there wasn't that much danger written all over it. Like, you don't read Daniel 1 and go, "Oh my gosh. I'm so afraid." Like, there's not that much danger in Daniel 1. In Daniel 3, you get the raging furnace of fire that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are threatened to be thrown into. That's danger. Right? You're like, "Fire in a furnace. Hot. Consumed. They might die. There's danger."

Daniel in Daniel 6 gets thrown into the lions' den. Do you guys remember that story from Sunday school? Dangerous, right? Like, "I'm going to be eaten alive by a lion. That's danger."

This, Daniel 1, doesn't really have that much danger. It doesn't seem like it. But, Daniel 1 is all about subtle intoxication of Babylon. It's actually very dangerous. It's dangerous like San Francisco's dangerous. Subtle intoxication. And that is very dangerous, if not more dangerous. And we need wisdom to see it, because we can't often see it. We can't often see the intoxication. We cannot often see how subtle San Francisco pushes on us and plays on us and seduces us and woos us to itself. So, we'll go back to where we started with the story of San Francisco and the quote I read where he says, "The church has not been arranged on the side of the Gospel against its environment. Too often it has been quietly absorbed by its environment."

Do you know what this is? This looks like compromise. This takes the form of slowly drifting away from God. Slowly drifting away. It's subtle. To what you used to use your money on like five years ago and how you spend your money today. It's that subtle. It's a shift in what you buy, it's a shift in how much you drink, what you used to drink and how much you used to drink five or ten years ago. I mean, if you're five years removed from 21, that is. You know what I'm saying. It's what you used to watch and what you're watching now. Things like little gateway things that we watch on Netflix or HBO Go or whatever that subtly ebb away. Like, if you were to show that to yourself eight years ago you'd be like, "Oh my gosh. No, no. I can't watch that."

Now you're like, "Oh, man. That's a great story."

It's the "story," right? And we get into it and we're like, "Everyone's watching it and everybody's live tweeting about it."

And we just get sucked into it. Or it erodes us. It erodes our relationship. We know. We watch it and we're like, "This is sinful. This is so bad. But, it's so good. How can I not watch it? It's just a story. It's life. It's real life, man."

Whatever. Right? It's about where our boundaries were and where they are now and it's a subtle erosion of those things. I'm just going to trust right now that the Holy Spirit is bringing things to your mind and to your heart right now. Ways that you've compromised, ways that you've drifted. And you're in a place where right now you're just not happy. You're not full of joy and passion for God because you're stuck in compromise. You can't be happy in sin because you have the Spirit of God living in you. So, every time you sin, you're like, "It's not as good as it was," because you have the Spirit of God in you that's grieved when you sin.

Like, you want to enjoy it. You're like, "Yeah. Uh, yeah." And you're conflicted. Like, "I want to enjoy this thing. But, the next day or right after or whatever there's the Spirit of

the Living God that's in me that's grieved by this compromise; that's grieved by this sin. So, I can't enjoy it like I used to enjoy sin."

But then, you're not really fully enjoying God either, because your sin and your compromise is keeping you from the peace of God; keeping you from the presence of God. So, what's needed right now is action. What's need is decisive action. There's a book by Brother Lawrence called "The Practice of the Presence of God." It's a great, amazing little book of thoughts and journal entries from Brother Lawrence who devoted his life as a monk to cultivating an awareness of God at all times and doing all things. And he says, "The way to practice the presence of God is by renouncing, once and for all, whatever does not lead to God."

Renouncing, once for all, whatever does not lead to God. "Does that thing lead you to God?"

"Well, no. But, it's just like a thing I do."

"Does it lead you to God?"

"No."

"Renounce it."

Renounce everything that does not lead you to the presence and the peace and the joy of God. And you might be thinking, "Well, how in the world will I do anything in this life?"

Daniel did. Daniel became the most powerful person in the most powerful nation of the known world at that time as a follower, and a devoted follower, of Yahweh. Renounce. Daniel had a resolve in his heart. "I will not do that. I will not go down that road. I will not eat from that thing. And if this means my death and possible even Ashpenaz's death and possibly the death of my four friends, then so be it. I'm not going down this road."

But, not only do we have to renounce, we have to resolve. We have to resolve ourselves to a greater vision of life. We have to resolve ourselves to a life lived for God's joy and love and peace; God's glory. Like, we have to resolve our self to go, "I'm actually going to live my life in San Francisco to please God. God is my only judge. I'm going to live a life that pleases God."

When I was a young pastor, I taught through the book of Daniel years and years and years ago. Gosh, like 15 years ago now or something like that. And I was young and I remember this, "But Daniel resolved," kind of did something in me and stuck in me. Like, there's some things that I, as a Christian, a follower of Christ, a follower of Jesus, and as a husband at the time and as a pastor, I have to resolve myself to do. And I have to resolve myself to do them almost every day or over and over and over again. Daniel was inspiration. But, also this quote from a minister named Jonathan Edwards. A preacher. A very famous preacher. Jonathan Edwards.

In 1723, he wrote his "resolutions" – 70 resolutions in all – when he was 20 years old. He was just entering into his career as a minister and he wrote down 70 things that he would resolve himself to do. He says this. This is how he starts:

"Being aware that I am unable to do anything without God's help, I do humbly entreat Him by His grace to enable me to keep these resolutions so far as they are agreeable to His will for Christ's sake."

Then he says this:

"Frequently, I hear persons in old age say how they would live if they were to live their lives over again."

Resolved, that I will live just as I think I shall wish I had done supposing I live to an old age. Resolved, I will look ahead to I'm 80 years old and what kind of man [or woman] do I want to be? Resolved, I'm going to start plotting a course right now and I'm going to be that right now. I'm going to do that right now. I'm not going to let my career and then all the managing of my family and managing of my schedule and managing of this crazy city and managing of my social media profile and all of that to overwhelm what I'm resolving to be as I walk and journey with God. Resolved, I'm going to do that now. I'm going to start living and plotting that now and I'm going to resolve myself to that today. He was 20 years old when he did this.

Daniel was a teenager. "Resolved, I'm going to be dependent on God and I'm not going to defile myself. This is the line. I'm not going to cross it and I'm going to resolve myself to this afresh."

And he did it over and over and over again. Three years. Possibly even longer. Not only do we need to renounce, we need to resolve in our hearts. We need to resolve in places of character in our life. This is the line and I'm not going to cross it. This is what I want to be. This is the kind of person I want to be. This is the kind of husband or wife or man or woman or boss or entrepreneur or freelancer or whatever it is. This is the kind of fill-in-the-blank I want to be. Resolved, I'm going to start renouncing things that keep me from the presence of God and I'm going to start charting a course of character in life and obedience to God to get there.

And God will meet us. And God will act. Guys, I know that's almost dangerous to say because I'm putting God on blast. Like, "God, You've got to show up here."

But, that's exactly what Daniel did. Like, "If God doesn't show up here we're done. We're doomed."

I want to live that way. I want to live in a way where like, "Okay. If God doesn't show up in this moment, we're all done. We're all done."

And this is what it'll take for us today to be faithful to Christ in our culture, in our context and in this city right now. It'll take renouncing. There's a lot of things to renounce. And it will take resolve. This is the way that Daniel begins to live a life of faithfulness. This is the way Daniel begins to live a life that's successful in Babylon and faithful to the call of God.

So, as we close, I want to, as a church – we've been a church for almost seven years. We'll be seven years old in January. I want to spend time repenting as a church and even for our church right now from where we, as a church, have drifted from devotion to Christ, passion for Christ, centrality of Jesus in our church. Where maybe at the beginning we used to talk a lot about how if not for Christ we're all doomed, but now we think we have it figured out. "If not for Christ and the stuff that we do and some other good programming that we have or some other good stuff that we have as a church."

I just want to repent for whatever or however we've drifted and I want to ask the Holy Spirit to show us now, even as a community, how we've drifted from devotion – committed devotion, passion, centrality of Jesus, childlike faith – and to repent from that together as a church and go, "Christ, we want You in the center. We want You to be everything to us. We want to be completely devoted to You. Our eyes, our mind, our heart, our lives fix on You. We don't want to live a life of compromise. We don't want our church to slowly ebb away because of small compromises. Lord, keep us from that."

Lord, we pray now that You would keep us from drifting. I want to pray and repent, really, on behalf of our church community in ways that we have slipped or drifted in our devotion to You; our passion for You. I want to repent for thinking we're so smart and we know how to do things now. "It can't be as simple as 'depend on God.' You need to do other things." Would You please forgive us of that, Lord? You might use some really strange means for us to live faithfully into this city. It might be as strange as not eating from the king's table but living off of leaks for three years or something. That might not seem so strange in this city, but it was strange then.

What ways do we live into faithfulness to You as a church community, God? Please show us. I want to pray for my brothers and sisters now who have compromised, who have slowly drifted away. When they moved here four years ago they never would've thought, they never would've chose that, "I'm moving there so I can move away from God." But, somehow, they got there. And it's devastating. It's very sad. They feel stuck. They don't know their way home.

I pray, Holy Spirit, that You would be a guiding light leading them to Christ; that they would renounce things that have kept them from You. Compromises that we make – silly ones, just stupid compromises that we make – for things that are not lasting. I pray, God, by Your Spirit You'd give us strength to resolve, to draw lines right now and to say, "I'm not going to do that. I'm drawing a line and I'm just not going to compromise that way. I'm not going to defile myself that way. I'm just not going to do it."

I know that takes a tremendous amount of self-control, but You promised one of the fruits of the spirit is self-control. So, Holy Spirit, come. We invite You now to bring Your love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control. Against such there is no law. Bring Your Spirit now, Lord. We pray in Christ's name, amen.

