

Sermon Series: Be Strong and Courageous: Everyday Leadership from Joshua

To be used with: Session Three: Stick to God's Plan

Sermon Title Possibilities:

Persistent Living

Scripture: Daniel 6:1-28

Connection to Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Be Strong and Courageous: Everyday Leadership From Joshua*, these sermon outlines will use different Scripture passages to reinforce the same themes regarding leadership, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit, focusing on the same topic, but using different Scripture.

This sermon outline is based on an episode in the life of the prophet Daniel that underscores his life of persistent faith and obedience. When opposition arose he didn't falter or turn away from God. He continued practicing his faith and living by it. Daniel's persistent walk with God got him into trouble, but also saw him through trouble.

The title of Session Three is "Stick to God's Plan." The Point is, "Leaders keep doing what God tells them to do."

Introduction: Regardless of the current state of Pluto in scientific circles, persistence paid off for American astronomer Clyde Tombaugh, who discovered what was then believed to be the planet Pluto. After astronomers calculated a probable orbit for this "suspected" heavenly body, Tombaugh took up the search in March 1929. Time magazine recorded the investigation: "He examined scores of telescopic photographs each showing tens of thousands of star images in pairs under the dual microscope. It often took three days to scan a single pair. It was exhausting, eye-cracking work--in his own words, 'brutal, tediousness.' And it went on for months. Star by star, he examined 20 million images. Then on February 18, 1930, as he was blinking at a pair of photographs in the constellation Gemini, 'I suddenly came upon the image of Pluto!' It was the most dramatic astronomic discovery in nearly 100 years.

Persistence in our walk with God is essential if we are to develop the character necessary for leadership. The regular exercise of faith and obedience will always bring about spiritual growth and strength. We see this in the life of Daniel, who as a captive was still elevated to the top levels of the empire by a pagan king. The king saw Daniel's integrity and sought to put him over the entire kingdom, second only to the king himself. But, Daniel's contemporaries were jealous and sought to destroy him. Throughout these events Daniel chose:

I. Character over Comfort (vs. 3-5)

Daniel's reputation did not just spring into being in the palace. He had lived a life of integrity and faithfulness even before captivity, and it showed. Godly character is not grown overnight and it does not come easy. Daniel had to make choices that were not comfortable over the years to become the mature, intelligent, trustworthy man he had become. It is a telling fact that the only way Daniel's enemies could trap him was by using his faithfulness against him!

Daniel's life is described well in 2 Peter 1:5-9, *"But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins"*.

II. Discipline over Disorder

Daniel lived a busy life, just as we do. And yet, he found the time to pray and seek the will and direction of God three times a day. Some may have said, "I'm too busy to pray that much." I imagine Daniel would have said, "I am too busy not to pray that much!" Persistence means discipline. Discipline in our devotional life, in our personal life, in our church life, in our relationships, in everything. Such discipline will prepare us when enemies attack or circumstances go awry.

Do we have the right to complain about no prayer in school when there is no prayer in our home? Should we defend the Bible in public, and then deny it in the privacy of our own lives? Do we have a right to complain about the moral decay of America if we fail to pray for our nation? Are we justified in talking about our pastor when we never pray for him? Persistence in the spiritual disciplines was where Daniel grew the character to face tough situations and remain faithful.

III. Love over Life

Is your love for Christ more important than your ambitions? Would you be willing to become Sunday brunch for the Lion's Club? In Job 13:15 he wrote, *"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."* Daniel personified this attitude. God had been faithful to him for years, and Daniel wouldn't abandon Him just to save his own skin or get ahead. He was persistent in his love for God even in hard times; even when that love was about to cost him his life.

We will never be persistent in faith and obedience without love for God. Fear cannot take us that far, guilt will take us less far. Only a love for God above all else will cause us to stand in faith and obedience even when trouble comes.

Closing: Look at a stone cutter hammering away at a rock a hundred times without so much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the 101st blow it splits in two. It was not the one blow that did it, but all the blows that had gone before. Persistence pays off. We just have to keep at it long enough to see the benefit!

Michael Stover is a graduate of Union University and Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. He has over twenty years of experience in local church ministry, as well as camp ministry and leading training conferences for Sunday School and VBS. He enjoys writing, computers, hunting, and fishing. Michael lives in Jonesborough, Tennessee with his wife Becky and four of their five children.