

THE DANIEL MANDATE: DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE!

Live Your Life for the Kingdom that Matters Most

Palmetto Baptist Church
Fall 2025

Texts: James 4:14; Ecclesiastes 11:9 – 12:1; Psalm 90:12

James 4:14 - Describes the Brevity of Life

¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.

Psalm 90:10 – Instructs us on How to Approach Life

¹⁰ The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away . . . ¹² So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 11:9–12:1 – Tells us When to Strive for a Life of Wisdom

⁹ Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. **Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. But know that for all these things God will bring you into judgment.** ¹⁰ Remove vexation from your heart, and put away pain from your body, for youth and the dawn of life are vanity. ¹ **Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come and the years draw near of which you will say, “I have no pleasure in them”;**

Introduction:

This past Wednesday, Beth and I flew home from spending four days in Rome, where I was preparing for the study tour our church is leading in May. As I thought about what I had seen and experienced during those days, I was struck by five things:

- 1. The immense power and allure of the world contrasted with the poverty and weakness of the early church.** Rome in Paul's day was a city of wealth, power, and significance—opulent, decadent, wealthy, influential—everyone who was anyone wanted to be in Rome! With more than 1 million people, it was the New York of the ancient world! ***What possible impact could a small group of early Christians meeting in house churches in the Jewish ghetto of the city possibly hope to make in a city like Rome?***

- 2. The fierce hostility of that ancient world toward the message of the gospel was shown through relentless opposition and ruthless persecution of its dedicated messengers.** As we visited the massive coliseum, our guide took us to a spot where we stood before a large cross erected in 1750 to honor the Christians who were martyred in that arena for their faith! More than 3000 early Christians were martyred in Rome, some in the very Colosseum where we were standing. *How could the gospel leave any lasting impact against such powerful enemies?*
- 3. The beauty and power of the gospel were demonstrated through the willing sacrifice of goods and even lives of early Christians.** One of the places I wanted to visit was the Christian catacombs. More than 300,000 Christians were buried in these catacombs between 100 and 300 AD. As we descended into the catacombs, our guide explained that early Christians used tomb designs with arches to identify, remember, and honor those who had been martyred. Sometimes entire families were martyred together and buried in similar tombs. *What gave the gospel such power in the lives of these early Christians that they were willing to face brutal deaths rather than deny its central claim – Jesus Christ Our Lord!*
- 4. There is still a great need today for the gospel to spread in places like Rome, just as there was when early believers sacrificed their lives as witnesses (martyrs) to its truths.** This year marks a Jubilee Year for the Catholic Church. Every 25 years, starting in 1650, the Pope declares a “Year of Jubilee” for all Roman Catholics. During that year, a plenary indulgence is available to anyone who makes a pilgrimage to Rome, visits the four main papal basilicas, celebrates mass, confesses, and prays specifically for the Pope. This abundant indulgence can be obtained either for yourself or for someone dear to you who has died and is now in purgatory. The Vatican expects more than 32 million Roman Catholics will undertake this pilgrimage in 2025. We saw thousands of them during our time in Rome. *How was the purity of the*

gospel lost by the descendants of those who once proclaimed its power and confirmed its authenticity with their own blood?

5. **Those who dedicate themselves to proclaiming the Gospel today will face the same relentless opposition and brutal persecution as early Christian witnesses in Rome, and some may meet the same fate as the martyrs of ancient Rome.** When we landed in Atlanta to clear customs and catch our flight to Greenville, my phone lit up with notifications and texts. An unmistakable emotion filled the Atlanta airport as people processed the news that was dominating all the public screens throughout—the news about the death of a young, vibrant, engaging, politically conservative, and unashamedly Christian man named Charlie Kirk, who had been shot and killed on the campus of Utah Valley University.

Charlie Kirk was known for his conservative political views, his promotion and defense of biblical moral values, and his unapologetic commitment to and proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Regardless of which side of the political divide someone is on, what became clear to me is that **no one is neutral about his death.** Most are mourning the senseless, violent act that took a life full of promise for the future. Nearly everyone is grieving for and with his wife and family. Some respond in reprehensible ways, celebrating the silencing of his voice in the public arena. Others try to use his senseless death to galvanize or polarize people around a particular political perspective or movement. But no one is truly neutral.

Which brings me to my purpose and goal this morning – I want to ask and answer the question: **How should I respond to the death of Charlie Kirk? What does God want to produce in me as I consider the death of someone who was one of my contemporaries and a faithful servant of the Gospel, regardless of how I may feel about certain political issues he advanced?**

Let me be clear –

- As an American, I valued, appreciated, and identified with many of his conservative political beliefs. But that is not my interest this morning, nor should it be yours. Not every faithful Christian will feel the same way about all of the political views he advanced.
- As a Christian, I celebrated and embraced his advocacy and defense of Biblical moral and ethical values. While all of us should appreciate his bold stand for biblical values in the public square (i.e., right to human life, divine design of marriage, gender, and human sexuality), that is not my focus this morning.

What most impacted me and was most important to him was his bold, unashamed, clear public commitment to the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

And that is what I want us to consider this morning. How might God use the very public death of one of His servants to stir up and motivate many more of His followers to dedicate their resources, time, and even their lives to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ clearly, compellingly, and unashamedly in places where it is not welcome?

I don't want this sermon to focus on the life of Charlie Kirk (nor do I believe he would want that). So, where can we find someone in our Bibles who shared the same commitments, lived by the same Biblical moral and ethical values, and spoke truth openly to the most powerful political figures of his time in **an effort to bring them to repentance and submission to the true and living God?** We find such an example in the life of a young Hebrew slave who spent his entire life in a place he never wanted to be, living with faithful integrity before God, who placed this servant in the highest political offices of his day.

God used this humble servant as an ambassador who represented the values and advanced the purposes of the Kingdom of Heaven in the Kingdoms of Babylon and Persia! And when He was done, one of those kings (Nebuchadnezzar) had become a true worshipper of YHWH; another of those kings (Cyrus) signed a decree and made provision for the

restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple; and the entire earth had been made aware of the power and authority Daniel's God.

If you want your life to count – to make a powerful impact for Christ in the lives of the people around you – then you must be marked and shaped by five indispensable qualities that will enable you to use your life to advance **the gospel of the kingdom that really matters** even in the face of relentless opposition and ruthless persecution.

Like Daniel, we must be marked by and known as people who are:

I. Genuinely Humble (1:8-9, 17)

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank. Therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.⁹ And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs . . .¹⁷ As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all literature and wisdom, and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

- The humility that characterized Daniel was not just meek words and a self-effacing attitude. The humility that characterized Daniel was his total submission to God and his dedication to obeying His Word!
- He and his friends embraced God's sovereignty even when God's sovereign will for their lives didn't make sense or wasn't what they planned or envisioned for their future.
- He and his friends were strongly committed to following God's moral and ethical will revealed in His written Word!
- They refused to eat food offered to idols (1), to bow down to pagan idols (3), and to pray to anyone other than God (6)—and they were ready to face any consequences for their obedience.

If you and I want to make the same kind of impact they did, we need to cultivate and commit to this kind of humility!

II. Remarkably Gracious (2:17-24)

Then Daniel went to his house and made the matter known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions,¹⁸ and told them to seek mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so

that Daniel and his companions might not be destroyed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. ¹⁹ Then the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision of the night. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven. ²⁰ Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. ²¹ He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding; ²² he reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him. ²³ To you, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for you have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of you, for you have made known to us the king's matter." ²⁴ **Therefore Daniel went in to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise men of Babylon; bring me in before the king, and I will show the king the interpretation."**

- Daniel served a God whose primary characteristic is mercy (grace). This is shown from the very first time God revealed His nature to Moses (Exodus 34:6-7).
- Daniel demonstrated gracious mercy throughout his life – to those in authority (steward of the chief eunuch, 1:11-12); to his enemies (2:17); to the king (4:27); and to his court, as shown in the testimony of Nebuchadnezzar's daughter (5:11-12).
- God's gracious offer of forgiveness to those who repent and submit was spoken with gracious words by a man whose life was characterized by grace.

If we want to attract others to God's grace, then they need to see and experience grace through us as they hear our words about the grace found in the Gospel!

III. Unusually Wise (5:11-12)

There is a man in your kingdom in whom is the spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him, and King Nebuchadnezzar, your father—your father the king—made him chief of the magicians, enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers, ¹² because an excellent spirit, knowledge, and understanding to interpret dreams, explain riddles, and solve problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation."

- The wisdom that defined Daniel wasn't just his ability to navigate life through academic mastery or life experience that was better than those around him.

- The wisdom Daniel possessed was not something found on earth. It wasn't something he gained through the hard work he and his friends invested in studying the language, history, literature, and academic knowledge at the University of Babylon that they and others were trying to master.
- The wisdom that set Daniel apart was a wisdom that came from God and was only available to those who believed and trusted in Him! We see this clearly in the exchange between Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel when the king asks if Daniel is “able to make known” his dream. Daniel’s response was clear – *“No man can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days!”* (2:26-28)
- This is exactly what James talks about when he exhorts us to seek wisdom from above with a heart of faith that does not waver!

If we want to attract others to the wisdom and beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must align ourselves with and live by the wisdom of God, which is ultimately revealed in Jesus Christ, who has become for us the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:30).

IV. Fearlessly Bold (4:27; 5:22-23)

A. Boldness to proclaim the Grace of God for repentance (4:27)

Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

- For over 30 years, Daniel lived with and served the King of Babylon. During this time, those around him saw his humility, witnessed his graciousness, and benefited from his wisdom.
- And then, one day, in God's providence, came the moment that God had orchestrated and for which all of Daniel’s life had prepared—a gospel moment that required immense boldness, demanded great clarity, and led to the conversion of the most influential political figure in Daniel’s kingdom!

B. Boldness to proclaim the Judgment of God for rebellion (5:22-27)

*And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, **though you knew all this,**²³ but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.²⁴ “Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed.²⁵ And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN.²⁶ This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, **God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end;**²⁷ TEKEL, **you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting;**²⁸ PERES, **your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”***

God prepared Daniel, moved him to Babylon, and allowed him to lose everything personally valuable—country, city, temple, home, family—so he could directly serve two pagan kings. God intended to humble one of them to salvation and the other to judgment. Daniel was the man chosen to fulfill these great purposes—so everyone would know that the God of Heaven rules over the kingdoms of men and gives them to whom He wishes.

The final quality we find in Daniel is one that gave credibility to everything Daniel did and said in the kingdoms of men.

V. Consistently Faithful (6:4-5; 22)

*⁴ Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, **because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him.**⁵ Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.” . . . ²² My God sent his angel and shut the lions’ mouths, and they have not harmed me, **because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm.”***

What made Daniel effective for God and influential in the lives of powerful pagan kings who had no knowledge of or respect for Daniel’s God was his life of spiritual integrity, publicly and privately.

And that must be how you and I live our own lives. How was this kind of faithful, spiritual integrity formed in Daniel? Through three means of grace that became regular and consistent holy habits for Daniel: reading Scripture, prayer, and obedience to God!

A. Reading Scripture Carefully and Submissively (9:1-2)

B. Praying Biblically Shaped Prayers Fervently (6:10; 9:4-19)

C. Trusting and Obeying at all Times and at all Costs (6:16).

And the impact of this kind of life and the gospel on the world of his day was remarkable! By God's grace, Daniel thrived (prospered) in the kingdoms of men because he served and promoted the values and agenda of the Kingdom of Heaven!

Conclusion: Needed – Modern Daniels and Esthers who will count their lives but a small price to pay to advance the Gospel of God in the kingdoms of men in our day!

WILL YOU BE ONE?