

SERIES: THE DAY OF MERCY
PART 9: HOW TO STAND FOR GOD PUBLICLY

Good morning (afternoon), CVCHURCH family. Welcome home this morning (afternoon). To our guests this morning we value you as a part of our family. We are a multicultural and intergenerational church, and we're excited about what God is doing in our midst creating a family that truly loves and cares for each other and our community.

Today, we come to the close of our incredible series on God's mercy which is His undeserved forgiveness and His unearned kindness. I want to look at for a few moments with you, "How to Stand for God Publicly." I want us to discover: How do we practically receive God's mercy at the work place where we spend 40-60 plus hours a week? God's Word says that when you receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior you become His minister, His representative wherever you go. Your ministry takes place where you work, where you live, where you play, and where you have influence. In Daniel chapter 6, I want us to ask three questions. How did Daniel keep getting promoted at his work? What caused Daniel to stand up and speak out at his work? And, What are the six ways you and I can benefit every time you stand up for God at work or wherever you are?

Please follow along as I read Daniel 6:1-5, **"Darius the Mede decided to divide the kingdom into 120 provinces, and he appointed a high officer to rule over each province. 2 The king also chose Daniel and two others as administrators to supervise the high officers and protect the king's interests. 3 Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel's great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire. 4 Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy. 5 So they concluded, 'Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his**

religion.”

I. How Daniel kept getting promoted at work

A. His professional competency made him stand out

Vs. 3 says, **“Daniel soon proved himself more capable than all the other administrators and high officers. Because of Daniel’s great ability, the king made plans to place him over the entire empire.”** It is very clear that Daniel was a gifted leader, but, more than that, he was a learner. He was a student. All leaders are learners. The moment you stop learning, you stop leading. Daniel was a student of God’s Word. A student of people. A student of history. Daniel was a student of culture. He just kept getting wiser and wiser. If you make wisdom a goal of your life, there’s no end to that one. There are some careers that peak pretty early in life. For instance, if you want to be a female Olympic gymnast, you peak at about 17. Then you’re going to be replaced by someone else who’s 12, 13, 14 or 15. Your body just isn’t that limber when you’re 25 or 35. If you’re going to play in the NFL, you’re going to peak at maybe 28 or 29. In different careers you peak at a certain level, and then it’s over. But if you decide to be a woman or a man that says, “I want to be a woman of wisdom, I want to be a man of wisdom.” At 85 years old you can be a whole lot wiser than you were at 84, 83 and 82. Wisdom is one area that you just keep growing in competence. Friends, Daniel was 82 at this time. If you go into retirement, it doesn’t mean that you are meant to stop influencing people for Jesus. That is the time to continue to mentor, lead and develop the people around you. Your professional competency will cause you to stand out.

B. His personal character made him stand out

It’s not just your professional competency, but it is your personal character. Daniel was a man of integrity. A man of generosity, humility. He was a godly man. A good man and a man of kindness and wisdom. In 6:4 the Bible says, **“Then the other administrators and high officers began searching for some fault in the way Daniel was handling government affairs, but they**

couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn. He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy." This is incredible, friends. These men intentionally wanted to shame and humiliate him by finding some fault in him in how he was handling governmental affairs, and they couldn't find anything to criticize or condemn, because he was always faithful, always responsible and completely trustworthy. No wonder he kept getting promoted. We're not told why these underlings didn't like Daniel, but it was most likely a racial bias because they were Mede and Persian and he was Jewish. They started trying to undermine him. Listen, you may be in a work situation right now, and there are people who are conspiring against you at work simply because of your faith. They don't really like you. They don't have any reason to not like you, but because of your faith, they want to get rid of you. Sometimes you cannot avoid the influence of office politics, but you can determine whether you are honest, reliable, trustworthy, and hard working just like Daniel. His personal character made him stand out. He was professionally competent, and he also was a man of character.

C. His public commitment to God made him stand out

Daniel is very open and public about his faith and his love for God and his commitment to Him. He prays in the open. He talks about God in the open. Remember, he had influenced Nebuchadnezzar to put faith in his God. Vs. 5 is incredible and very telling. **"So they concluded, 'Our only chance of finding grounds for accusing Daniel will be in connection with the rules of his religion.'"** Come on, somebody. Isn't this happening today? Of course it is. People are baited into having to make commitments that go against their deeply held biblical beliefs. Men and women have lost their businesses, their homes and their reputation in the community. What happened to Daniel is happening today right here, right now in our culture. If you haven't read our Cultural Impact Team inserts, please do. Our lawmakers are targeting biblical values and they are trying to force many of us to have to live in a culture that is an assault on our morals and ethics. It's not coming—it is here. So these administrators set a trap for Daniel by appealing to the arrogance (an excessively high opinion of oneself), hubris (overbearing pride), and pride. They asked Darius to make a

law that would make it illegal for anyone to pray to anyone human or divine except him for 30 days to be thrown into the lions den. Once he would sign this law, not even he could change it. Darius fatal flaw was his pride. By appealing to his vanity the men talked Darius into signing a law that effectively made himself a god for 30 days. You would think that Daniel might consider altering his behavior for the 30 day ban on prayer to anyone or anything other than Darius. But look at vs. 10 **“But when Daniel learned that the law had been signed, he went home and knelt down as usual in his upstairs room, with its windows open toward Jerusalem. He prayed three times a day, just as he had always done, giving thanks to His God.”** It’s time to lose our fear what our culture thinks about us. If you truly have surrendered your life to Jesus Christ, our culture hates you because it impacts how you think, feel and behave concerning sexuality, relationships, morality and ethics, and your world view. It is time we get over ourselves and stand up for Jesus in our neighborhood, in our work places and wherever we are. Don’t be obnoxious and offensive intentionally, but when you know you’re being pressured to conform to this culture and how they think and act, you must obey God’s Word. Romans 12:2 says, **“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.”**

II. What caused Daniel to stand up and speak out at work?

A. He remembered that God was merciful to him in the past

Daniel had been tested at least 8 times during his 60 plus years of service to the Persian leaders he served. He reflected on how God took care of him and his friends when they refused to bow down to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar. “God took care of me when I had to deliver bad news and say you’re going to lose your kingdom.” Every time he was challenged to stand down concerning his allegiance to God, he always stood up for what God stood for. When you begin to get scared—“What will people do to me at work if I stand up for my faith, or my values or my morals?” If you’re fearful of what will happen to you if

you do what's right or you speak up for the truth just remember how God has taken care of you in the past.

B. He prayed three times a day

In verse 10, we're told that Daniel had the discipline of praying three distinct times a day to God. Do you think if you were to become more disciplined in your prayer life and spent three times a day talking with God that your faith would get stronger? That you might be less insecure? That you might not be so vulnerable to the disapproval of other people, or that you wouldn't fear rejection as much as you do? You might write this down. **The secret of standing strong is kneeling often.**

C. He knew that the rewards were greater than the risks

Is it risky to break the law? Yes. Might there be punishment? Yes. Could he even lose his life? Yes, but as Peter and the apostles said to the religious governing body in the book of Acts 5:29 **"We must obey God rather than any human authority."** Friends, this is an important text, because, as America continues to change, there are going to be some laws that you just can't abide by. I recommend that you keep reading the pamphlet that our Cultural Impact Team provides for us so you can keep up on the unbelievable laws Sacramento is trying to get passed as law. If they do, you will have a decision you must make. For me and my house we will follow Jesus Christ and take our stand. You will have to decide. Am I going to be like Daniel and Peter and the apostles? What is Daniel doing here? He's involved in passive civil disobedience. He said, "I can't obey that law. My number one allegiance is to God. I will not put anything before God. 'You will have no other God's before Me.'" This is passive civil disobedience. Daniel went home, threw open his windows, and he prayed, which was his regular discipline. He did not change his spiritual discipline because of this new law. Daniel knew the rewards of doing the right thing were greater than the risks, and that making the wrong decision would be devastating. The key to defeating fear in your life, any kind of fear--it could be fear of disapproval, or the fear of witnessing, or whatever it

is--you can minimize the negative possibilities, and maximize the benefits of doing the right thing. Get your eyes off of “Well this could happen, or this could happen. I could lose my job. I could lose my salary. I could lose my reputation. I could lose....” Wisdom says you must take into account what could happen and what you might lose. You need to honestly look at what you could lose and what could happen, but faith says you minimize the negative and you maximize the benefits of acting in faith and how God will reward your faithfulness. Many of us have mixed emotions about standing for God in the public space. This is what this text is all about today: How to stand strong for God publicly. If you take a stand for Jesus publicly, you most likely won’t be thrown in the lions den, but you could be ostracized, you can be gossiped about. A lot of different things could happen to you. We know people who are losing their businesses because of standing firm on their Christian values. How in the world do I stay strong? How do I not be shaken when society is changing around me? You remember the benefits of doing the right thing. You remember the benefits for standing for God.

III. Six ways you benefit every time you stand up for God

A. You gain a victory over fear

Every time you stand for God at work, in the community, with your neighbor or with a friend, you gain a victory over fear. I want to give you three truths about fear.

1) Fear is just a feeling, and it will not last

You know whenever you have feelings, particularly negative ones, you think you’re going to feel that way for the rest of your life. When you’re depressed, you feel, “I’m going to be depressed the rest of my life.” No you’re not. When you’re afraid, you don’t have to feel those fears for the rest of your life. When you’re grieving, sometimes people won’t lean into their grief and mourning because they’re afraid they’re going to feel that way for the rest of your life. I have great news for you, friends, about these kinds of troubling emotions and

feelings. You won't because the very nature of emotions is that they do not last. Have you noticed in your life that sadness and happiness do not last forever. They are fleeting. How you think about them is key to gaining control, so your emotions don't drive your life. Does fear last? No. You have to invite it back in through the front door over and over and over to keep it going. Both positive and negative emotions are temporary. How you focus your mind is key to managing and getting the most out of your emotions.

2) Fear is uncomfortable, but it won't kill me

When you are afraid and you're panicking and your heart is palpitating and you're sweating and your head gets dizzy and you think, "I am going to die"—the good news is you have been in those fearful situations, but you didn't. **Fear is spelled F-E-A-R: False Evidence Appearing Real.** That's fear for the most part. It's not real. Only Jesus is real. Doesn't matter how you feel, only Jesus is real. Fear is just a feeling. Can't last. Fear is uncomfortable but it won't kill you.

3) Fear grows when I give into it, but lessens when I take action against it

Every time you give into fear, and you don't do the thing you fear, the fear gets bigger and bigger and bigger, and it dominates, and it keeps pushing you further and back into a closet, into a corner, into a trap. You cannot argue your way out of fear. There's only one way to eliminate fear in your life. Take action against it. Fear does not respond to reason, because it's unreasonable. Fear only responds to action. Like the Israelites, you must step into the water first, and then it parts. Most of us wait for God to remove our fears, and He says, "You be obedient, you take the first step, and you will conquer your fear." The reason this is so important is because we're to be purpose driven people. We base our lives on our values and commitments, not our fears. I refuse to let fear dominate me. This is called courage, friends. Courage is not the absence of fear, but you feel the fear, and you do what you believe God is calling you to do. You're only courageous when you do the thing you're scared to death to do while you're doing it. That's courage. Are you a courageous woman? When was

the last time you took action against your fear and you did the thing you feared the most? Are you a courageous man? When was the last time you did the thing you feared the most? I know I need to reconcile with that person. I know I need to go ask for forgiveness. I need to offer forgiveness. I know I need to tell that person about Jesus. The first Christians in Acts 4:29 prayed this way, **“Lord, You know the threats people make. So help us as Your servants, to speak Your Word without fear.”** Fear grows when I give into it. It lessens, it dilutes, when I take action. You stand up for God and what He is asking you to do, and you gain a victory over your fear.

B. It builds my faith and character

Faith and character are like a muscle, and the only way you develop a muscle is to put it under stress. That’s what weight training is all about. Your muscle does not grow by eating bon bons while you’re watching “Who paid less for the dress” or whatever. 2 Timothy 1:8 says, **“So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. With the strength that God gives you, be ready to suffer for the sake of the Good News.”** Standing for God is a victory over fear and standing for God builds my faith and character.

C. It gives God an opportunity to do a miracle

The truth is most people have never seen an absolute, true miracle in their life. The reason why is because they never put themselves out on a limb. Never be afraid to go out on a limb; that’s where the fruit is. You’ll start seeing miracles when you step out onto the water. You never know that God can solve your problems if you never had any problems. Daniel saw a miracle because He gave God that opportunity. Daniel defied the edict of not praying to anyone but Darius for 30 days. He was caught and was thrown into the lions’ den. I don’t have enough time to go into all of the details, but if you will go home and read Daniel chapter six, you will see that Darius really did care a lot about Daniel. When King Darius was told that Daniel broke the law, the Bible says in Daniel 6:14, **“Hearing this, the king was deeply troubled, and he tried to think of a way to save Daniel. He spent the rest of the day looking for a way to get**

Daniel out of this predicament.” In vs. 16, as he gave the orders for Daniel to be thrown in the lions’ den, the king says to Daniel, **“May your God, whom you serve so faithfully, rescue you.”** Then in vss. 18-19, the Bible tells us that he spent the night fasting, refused his usual entertainment and couldn’t sleep that night, and early the next morning, the king got up, went to where Daniel would have been, and, the text says, **“He called out in anguish, ‘Daniel, servant of the living God! Was your God, whom you serve so faithfully, able to rescue you from the lions?’** Vs. 23 says, **“The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den.”** The point is that Daniel took his stand publicly for God by being willing to cross the religious law that was targeted towards him. He was willing to risk his life for God, and God honored his risk by protecting him from the lions that then jumped on the leaders who had planned his demise when they were thrown in the den instead. Take risks of faith and allow God to do a miracle on your behalf.

D. It encourages other believers to stand up

When you stand up for God at work, or on the field playing a game or anywhere else, it encourages other believers. They see your courage. You know how courage is contagious. If you have a cowardly leader, everyone else is a coward. Everyone else wants to wimp out. Courage is contagious. When you step out for God and you go, “I’m all in. I’ll do this. I’ll speak up for God at.....” You know what? Other people start coming out of the shadows. Paul, in Philippians 1:14, says this, **“And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message without fear.”** Your boldness will encourage other people to be bold. That’s a powerful benefit, friends.

E. It’s a powerful example to unbelievers

It is very possible, friends, that how you stand up for God publicly and how you handle pain could be your two greatest witnesses, your two greatest testimonies and your two greatest examples to your unbelieving friends, neighbors, relatives, coworkers. How you handle pain and how you handle rejection could

just be your two greatest testimonies to how Jesus makes a difference in your life. It's a powerful example to believers when you say, "Sorry, I won't do this. I will not violate my conscience. Everyone else might be doing it, but I won't." It's a powerful example to unbelievers. In Acts 4:13, the Bible says, **"The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus."** The more time you spend with Jesus, the stronger you're going to be. You stand strong when you kneel often. Listen to how Daniel's life impacted King Darius, just like he influenced Nebuchadnezzar in chapter 4. Daniel 6:25-28 **"Then King Darius sent this message to the people of every race and nation and language throughout the world: 'Peace and prosperity to you! 26 I decree that everyone throughout my kingdom should tremble with fear before the God of Daniel. For He is the living God, and He will endure forever. His Kingdom will never be destroyed, and His rule will never end. 27 He rescues and saves His people; He performs miraculous signs and wonders in the heavens and on earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.' 28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian."** As we celebrate fathers next week and we celebrated our mothers last month, you can model not only for your children and your grandchildren and great grandchildren and future generation to talk about how you stood up in a culture that was going anti-God. You stood up. You had the courage and the character and said, "I'll get on my knees and stand strong."

F. I will be rewarded in eternity

Jesus Himself says that your standing strong for Him in this culture will be rewarded in eternity. Jesus says in Matthew 5:10-12 **"God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. 11 God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are My followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in**

the same way.” Daniel is an incredible model for us, because he stood strong publicly for God for the entire course of his prophetic role in Persia for over 65 to 70 years. Let’s pray and ask God to grant us His mercy to stand strong for Him in our families, neighborhoods, city, culture, and the world. Let’s pray.