

Help, my world has changed!

Our world has changed. I believe that 2020 will be remembered as a year of global disruption. Our lives have been disrupted: our daily routines, our weekly rhythms, the habits and regular patterns of our lives have been altered. Our world has changed very suddenly. Over the next two weeks I want to talk about how to deal with this disruption and how to live anchored and stable at a time of great turbulence.

I know that many of us don't know what to make of all of this. Let us look to the Word for answers.

Opening Text: Daniel 9:1-4

For those unfamiliar with this passage or with Daniel, let me just say that he lived at a time when the people of Israel had been taken captive to Babylon. He would have been in his teenage years when he was taken from everything that he knew, to a completely different land, to a completely different people with different customs and religion.

Suddenly, life for Daniel and all the Israelites had changed radically: they were captives and cut off from the land God had given them and unable to go to the House of God in Jerusalem.

This was a time of national **disruption**, **disaster** (v.13) and **desolation** (v.2,18). Even Jesus referred to this time in Matthew 24:15 as "*the abomination of desolation*".

By the time of this writing, Daniel was probably 80 years of age. He longed for the land he had come from, for a return to the normality of the life he had known as a teenager. He also longed to understand exactly why this had happened. He didn't know what to make of this disruption.

I don't know about you, but I feel that somehow, we are also living at a crucial time. Suddenly, most of what was familiar to us has changed – and there is no specific end in sight.

We may not feel it as much as in other nations, but this has been a time, not only of disruption but also of desolation: close to 15 million people on our planet have been infected with this virus and more than 600 thousand have so far died. The economic and social repercussions are still unfolding and they're not looking good.

What to make of all that is happening and how to cope with this global disruption? These are some of the questions I would like to address with you over the next couple of weeks.

Here's what Daniel did while going through disruption, disaster and desolation:

1. He went to the Scriptures

What does God have to say about this? We have all heard what the 'experts', politicians and everybody else had to say about the current crisis but what does God have to say about this?

Daniel went to the scriptures. For many in exile, they had forgotten the scriptures, some even what it was like to worship in the Temple. How dangerous it is to accept a new 'normal' without God and His word in it!

He started reading the book of Jeremiah. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah prophesied about a time when Israel would persistently reject God and reap the results of their own decisions.

While reading Jeremiah, he discovered also that God had also promised a time when He would bring them back from exile. He did the 'maths' and the time was near!

We too need to start with the scriptures. Jeremiah spoke about that generation and Jesus speaks to our generation now. He spoke of pandemics; He spoke about many of the signs we see happening right before our eyes. Maybe it is time to revisit the book of Revelation and see what Jesus said about the end of the age.

At a time of lockdown and adversity let us look to the scriptures.

2. He went into a place of prayer and intercession

Yes, I know these are the basics: the word, prayer... but the basics always work and they are do-able (they are not out of reach or unattainable).

V.3-4 - *3 Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. 4 And I prayed to the Lord my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments*

It was in this place of prayer that God gave Daniel a 'behind the scenes' tour of what was really happening. In Daniel 10 an angel explained to him that there was spiritual warfare in the heavenlies. All that was happening on earth was the result of a combat between demonic principalities and angels of God in the invisible realm.

That vision received in prayer helped him make sense of the situation he was going through.

That is the same for us. Most of what we are dealing with in the natural is an assault that started in the spiritual realm. That is why we need to pray. As we pray, we enforce the victory of Jesus over the powers of darkness.

Paul in the NT gave us more insight about spiritual warfare in the book of Ephesians, chapter 6.

The greatest thing you and I can do during this time of global disruption is to seek the word and seek the face of God in prayer.

3. He said 'sorry' – repentance

We don't always know why things happen, but repentance is always a good starting point. *Have I missed God?* We can all miss God and the best He has for us in any situation. Some people find it hard to say, "I am sorry". They either think too highly of their own 'righteousness' or have too much pride.

Secular humanistic thinking teaches that saying sorry is a sign of weakness. **Humility is not weakness. Jesus was humble but He was powerful! He was meek yet, not weak.**

V.13 - ¹³ *"As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the Lord our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth.*

'Repentance' is also New Testament word and according to Hebrews 6, it is one of the 6 foundational doctrines of Christ.

a) Daniel repented with strong faith in God's mercy.

Repentance is not a hopeless exercise before an unforgiving God. No. He is revealed as a God of mercy.

V.9 - ⁹ *To the Lord our God belong mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him.*

V.18 - ⁸ *O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies.*

b) This faith in the mercy of God gave him the boldness to address God with confidence

V.19 - ¹⁹ *O Lord, **hear!** O Lord, **forgive!** O Lord **listen and act!** **Do not delay** for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.*

Hear, forgive, listen, act, do not delay!

Daniel wrestled in prayer! He was determined to *pray things through* with boldness.

The humility of repentance and the boldness of faith are such a powerful combination!

V.20 - ²⁰ *Now while I was **speaking, praying, and confessing** my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my **supplication** before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God, ²¹ yes, while I was **speaking in prayer**, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. ²² And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, "O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. ²³ At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are **greatly beloved**; therefore, consider the matter, and understand the vision*

Greatly beloved. In the middle of all that we are going through, we need to remind ourselves that we are loved by God - greatly!

We need to **remember the word, remember prayer, remember to say sorry** and **approach with boldness** God's throne of grace, in order to find grace and help in time of need. **Remember that you are loved!**

Daniel lived at a time of disruption, desolation and disaster. He could have been indifferent or fatalistic about it, but he chose to be passionate, he chose to understand and stand in the gap for his nation. When he did that, God moved quickly! An angel came swiftly (v.21) and the moment he prayed, immediately a command went out (v.23)

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Next week we will look at those things that should stay unchanged in our lives – those things that will help you and I navigate disruption and keep the peace of God in our lives.