

Help, my world has changed! **part 2**

Our world has changed. We will probably remember 2020 for the rest of our lives as a year of **global disruption**. Our lives have been disrupted: our daily routines and our weekly rhythms. The habits and regular patterns of our lives have been altered.

As the pandemic continues, we have had to adapt and form new habits. Many of us now work from home, meet our colleagues via zoom and even attend church using YouTube.

Nobody likes disruption. Routine, structure and stability are definitely a gift from God.

The first great global disruption we read about in the Bible was the flood. But after that, God said these words:

Genesis 8:22 - *“As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.”*

- a) God designed nature to operate on a schedule. He set in place times and seasons that were intended to never cease – to go on uninterrupted.
- b) God also designed life for the people of Israel in this way:
 - **their years** were to be punctuated by festivals to be kept at certain times of the year – 7 of them. These were to be celebrated in an uninterrupted way.
 - **their weeks** were to follow a pattern of work, followed by a day of rest on the Sabbath.
 - **Even their days** followed a certain pattern and they prayed 3 times a day. We see in **Acts 3** that even the early disciples observed that structure: Peter and John went to the temple at the hour of prayer, the 9th hour. In **Acts 10**, we find a gentile, Cornelius, also praying at the ninth hour.

Routine and structure are a gift from God. He created rhythms and cycles and patterns.

That is why Paul told Timothy in **1 Timothy 2:1-2** that people should pray with *“supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks... that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life”* ... - not an unstable, uncertain, disturbed life.

As we saw last week, Daniel lived at a time when all of the Jewish customs he had known from his youth were suddenly interrupted. Nebuchadnezzar and his invading army removed the people of Israel out of their land, into Babylon.

Suddenly there was no house of God for them to go to worship in, they couldn't keep their feasts because in Babylon they followed a different calendar and sabbath was just a workday. Everything they knew had changed. Their lives and their world suffered a major interruption.

- What to do at times when change comes, when life is not predictable, when we look at the future and it is foggy?
- What to do when we are forced into abandoning what is familiar asked to embrace new habits?
- What to do at times of disruption?

In times of change, there are some things that should remain unchanged in our lives.

Let us look again at the example of Daniel:

1. His relationship with God did not change

Daniel 6:10 - *10 Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, **as was his custom since early days.***

Since his **early days**, when he was just another prisoner of king Nebuchadnezzar, to the time when he became mighty in that kingdom, Daniel kept his relationship with God. The fiery furnace didn't change that, the prison didn't change that, success didn't change that either! Here in the context of Daniel 6, Daniel was being threatened with death, but he didn't change.

... "**as his custom was since early days**" - A 'custom' is a repeated behaviour. It is a habit or a routine.

A lot had changed in his life but not his relationship with God, not his worship, not his habit to worship and pray with an open window, unashamed about his God.

2. His heart for the house of God didn't change

"And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down"

- a) The 'window opened towards Jerusalem' meant that he hadn't forgotten the Holy city and its temple, he hadn't forgotten what it was like to gather with all the other Jews and celebrate the feasts and the daily routine of prayer in the temple.

Psalms 138:2^a - *I will worship toward Your holy temple, and praise Your name*

Psalms 84:5 NET Bible: *How blessed are those who find their strength in you, and long to travel the roads that lead to your temple!*

His world had changed but not his heart towards the house of God in Jerusalem. He hadn't forgotten that custom.

We are meeting online right now but let us not forget that we belong together. The day will come when we will see each other again at 1070 Stud road. ***“Blessed are those... who long to travel the roads that lead to your temple”***

Until then, 'keep the window open', keep meeting on Sundays at 9 and 11. Let us keep that custom.

b) **Luke 4:16** - *“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.*

Even Jesus had this routine. Even Jesus kept assembling in the local synagogue He had been brought up in. He went there when He was a child and He went there when He announced that He was the Messiah.

By the way, **Synagogues started exactly in the days of Daniel**, in the exile. They couldn't go to the temple but their understanding of the importance of believers meeting together was such that they started meeting in small groups. Every village that had at least 10 families would erect a meeting house where they would gather to worship and to hear the Scriptures.

Let us do the same. Our world has changed but we still need to gather together. As soon as we are allowed, let us meet in Connect Groups and then in our church auditorium. That is a good habit to keep! That is a good 'custom'.

Hebrews 10:25 - *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

'As is the manner of some' – It is the manner (or the custom) of some but it was not the custom of Daniel or Jesus.

The word 'custom' in the Greek is the word 'etho' – meeting together is part of our 'ethos' as believers. Ethos is defined in the dictionary as *“the characteristic spirit of a culture, or community as manifested in its attitudes and aspirations”*

Meeting together is the culture of God's kingdom. One of the names of church in the Bible is 'assembly'. We cannot have an assembly of one.

3. His heart for the Word of God didn't change

We saw last week how Daniel started reading the book of Jeremiah to understand the times he was living in. Israel had forgotten about this book, but Daniel rediscovered it. We have not just one book, but a whole Bible and we need to see what God is saying about our time – the end times.

That was also part of the 'custom' of Jesus:

Luke 4:16-17 - ¹⁶ So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His **custom** was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and **stood up to read**. ¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had **opened the book**, He found the place where it was written:

The custom of standing up to read, to open the book, is a custom to keep. It is a vital discipline in the life of a Christian. It needs to be a repeated behaviour. We need to make room for the word of God in our lives. God spoke about this time and what we need to do.

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God hasn't! He said in **Malachi 3:6**, "*I am God and I do not change*". He is still in the same place He's ever been.

The world has changed but certain things will need to remain unchanged in our lives.

In a moment of great threat Daniel did what he had always done. His circumstances had changed but he didn't change his habits. He did exactly what he had always been accustomed to do: he went to God three times a day, like always.

The enemy wants to change your habits (the good ones). This whole disruption is being used by the enemy to try to change things that were basic in any Christian's life like going to church, worshipping together, giving, serving, being involved in missions etc.

Psychologists tell us that it takes 66 days to form a new habit. The longer we are at this the more vigilant we will have to be not to abandon good habits, kingdom values, good customs – like those we see in Daniel or Jesus.

Let nothing that is happening disrupt your passion for the Lord, your love for His word, your desire to assemble with other Christians and the understating what our *ethos* as Christian is, our values, our mission etc.