



SERMON SINGLES

Touching Lives with Dr. James Merritt

Putting Your Foot Down

Daniel 1

NOTES INTRODUCTION In today's key passage of Scripture, we read about a boy named Daniel and the predicament he found himself in as he shared a meal with the Babylonian king. He was offered food and wine from the king, but something deep in his soul told him not to accept the offerings. Why would he draw a line at eating the king's food and drinking the king's wine? There have been all kinds of speculation and reasons given, but we are not specifically told. One thing we do know is that in Middle Eastern culture, when you sat down to eat a meal, particularly with a ruler or a king, you were pledging loyalty to the king, but there was only one King and that was God. It appears as if Daniel is out of options. Yet here we learn a lesson about lines we find in the dirt of our own lives. As you go through life, you will find God-drawn lines that the world will tempt you to cross. When you stay on the God side, you will stay on the good side. If that's the side you want to stay on, then pay close attention and follow where Daniel put his foot down. **KEY POINTS** 1. Draw Your Boundaries There were a lot of reasons for Daniel to say, "Yes" to what the king was offering. He was on his own; nobody back home would ever know about it. Everybody else was going to eat it -and it's great food--some steak, twice-baked potato, washed down with Cabernet. But Daniel had boundaries - boundaries that his parents had taught him. Perhaps it was boundaries that the Spirit of God had given to him. Regardless, this was a line he knew he couldn't cross. This was not a matter of diet: it was a matter of dedication. There was a line in the dirt and Daniel had to decide which side of that line he was going to be on. But what's important to note about this passage is that we can infer that Daniel had already decided what his boundaries were before he found himself in a tempting situation. So establish your boundaries now Know what they are and resolve to guard your boundaries closely. 2. Define Your Convictions There is an obvious difference among the boys in attendance at this dinner because of all the Jewish boys there, only Daniel and his three buddies drew a line in the sand.

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NOTES But what was the difference? All the boys were Jews. All had been brought up to believe in God. All were taught God's Word. All had been brought up to believe there was a difference between right and wrong. What made these four guys so different? Here is the difference. All of them had beliefs, but Daniel and his friends had convictions. There is a tremendous difference between holding a belief and having a conviction. A belief is what you have in your head; a conviction is what you hold in your heart. A belief says, "I am convinced of this truth." A conviction says, "I am committed to this truth." People will argue for their beliefs, but they will die for their convictions. This is why it's so important that we define our convictions, and that means going deep enough in our relationship with the Lord to do so. As we see in this story, belief is not the same as conviction. Even the devil believes in God. You must take it a step further and define your convictions based on God's Word and His Holy Spirit working in you if you want to honor Him and withstand whatever temptation comes your way. 3. Demonstrate Your Faith Daniel had no idea as a 14-year-old boy when he was taken captive in a foreign land that over the next seventy years of his life, he would climb to the highest positions in the courts of both Babylon and Persia. In the last years of his life, he would exercise more power than any other member of the Jewish race that had ever lived. He had no idea that he would have the great privilege of leading his nation back to God and ultimately leading their return to their homeland according to God's promise. God had a greater plan for Daniel than Daniel could have ever had for himself. Do you know why that plan was carried out? Because Daniel saw God's line in the sand, and he refused to cross it. That kind of determination and conviction requires faith. It requires an unbridled trust in God that He is going to take care of you and see you through whatever difficult circumstances you find yourself in. Daniel had that kind of faith even when it seemed like he was out of options, and you can have that kind of faith as well no matter what you're facing.

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QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- 1. When was a time you wished you hadn't crossed a line God gave you? What would you do differently in that situation if you could go back?
- 2. When was a time when you stayed true to your convictions and didn't cross a line God drew for you? What did you learn from that experience?

3.	What are some convictions you have defined in your life? List them out below.

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