

Joke: An Airbus 380 is on its way across the Atlantic. It flies consistently at 600 mph at 30,000 feet, when suddenly a jet fighter appears.

The pilot of the fighter jet slows down, flies alongside the Airbus and greets the pilot of the passenger plane by radio: "Airbus, boring flight isn't it? Now have a look here!"

He rolls his jet on its back, accelerates, breaks through the sound barrier, rises rapidly to a dizzying height, and then swoops down almost to sea level in a breathtaking dive. He loops back next to the Airbus and asks: "Well, how was that?"

The Airbus pilot answers: "Very impressive, but watch this!"

The jet pilot watches the Airbus, but nothing happens. It continues to fly straight, at the same speed. After 15 minutes, the Airbus pilot radios, "Well, how was that?"

Confused, the jet pilot asks, "What did you do?"

The Airbus pilot laughs and says: "I got up, stretched my legs, walked to the back of the aircraft greeted all the passenger's, then got a cup of coffee and a chocolate fudge pastry."

Today, I want to show you a quality that has the potential not only to impact the trajectory of your year, but of your life as well.

This quality is one of the keys to your spiritual strength.

It's a key to your impact in ministry. It's a key to your financial potential, your spiritual growth. This quality is a key to you accomplishing your goals.

Would you like know what the quality is?

Before I do let me tell you. . .

And this is really good news because this quality is not based on your appearance. It's not based on your background, nor your education.

The quality that has the potential to impact every area of your life is your consistency.

Your consistency has the potential to impact your life more than you would ever imagine.

And some of you are thinking right, "Well, I'm in trouble."

Because so many of us are incredibly inconsistent.

We're inconsistent with what we eat, with our exercise. We're inconsistent in reading the Bible and our prayer time.

Some of us can't even get to places on time consistently.

Truth is some of you are saying right now, "The only thing I'm consistent at is being inconsistent."

And if you find yourself like so many with really good intentions, but you struggle to follow through, I want you to know I understand how you feel.

There are so many areas of my life that I've been inconsistent as well.

Let me share with you one. Joy and I pray together and do a small devotion in the morning before we both head out for the

day. But you know what? There has been a few times I totally forgot.

Here's another, I bought a Bible study to do together. And we were doing really well, but after life happened. And after that I just haven't picked it back up yet.

Don't miss understand me I'm not saying neither of us read the Bible or study it we just haven't got back into the study I purchased.

I have been inconsistent at times.

Can anybody else relate to that?

If you find yourself wanting to do some spiritual disciplines, and I hope you do, or wanting to take care of your life in a certain way or wanting to be an encouragement to your kids, and yet you're inconsistent, I want you to understand you are not alone.

As a matter of fact the guy that wrote half of the New Testament, he often found himself battling with inconsistency.

The apostle Paul in Romans 7 said this.

Romans 7:15 (NLT): 15 I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate.

He said, "I don't really understand myself." Ever feel that way?

Sometimes you think I don't know why I do some of the things I do.

He went on to say, I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate.

I don't know about you but I can certainly relate to that.

Truth is church consistency matters.

Byron Pulsifer said, "consistency is one of the biggest factors to accomplishment and success."

And if you find yourself often inconsistent, and if you're tired of having good intentions but falling short again and again, this message is for you.

And so here we are in our series on determination looking at areas where we need to pre-determine, determine today what we will do tomorrow when life hits us.

One thing we need understand as followers of Jesus, is that our decisions are incredibly important. That is why we started this series looking at just learning to make better decisions.

I mentioned that the direction of our life is determined by the quality of our decisions.

But the problem is for so many of us, is that we're not very good decision-makers.

So what we're doing instead of waiting for a moment in the future when faced with a situation that we know we're likely to face, instead of waiting for that moment and that time in the future to try to determine a course of action in that moment, we're going to determine now so that we are ready for tomorrow.

And last week, we talked about being ready when the enemy comes looking to trip us up, and he will try, so we need to be ready. Wear the full armor of God that we looked at in Ephesians. Since we know his schemes and knowing that he

wants to steal our joy, kill our potential, and destroy our destiny we need to be ready. Determine today what we will do with those attacks tomorrow.

This week, we're going to determine in advance to be consistent.

We're going to determine today that when so many people are faithless we're going to be faithful, we're going to decide in advance just like Jesus who said it is finished, that we are going to finish well.

What we're doing today is we're deciding in advance, and here's the key.

It's not on your own, for it's in Him we live and move and have our being. It's not on our own, for it's through Him that I can do all things, but it is with God's help I can be consistent.

Say that. . .with God's help.

Why does consistency matter?

Because successful people do consistently what other people do occasionally.

Successful people do over and over again what other people do every now and then, because we are not what we occasionally do. We are what we consistently do.

And so what I'm going to do today is show you through the scriptures why consistency matters. And my prayer is that it will help you grow in the area of being consistent in a way that would honor God.

To help us do that let's look at an Old Testament character named Daniel.

This guy was consistent. Morally, relationally, spiritually consistent.

Let me give you a little background. About 18 years after the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem they came and took many young men captive.

Specifically the best and brightest often around the age of 12. The goal was to indoctrinate them with their way of life. The food they were to eat, their education system, their beliefs and values.

They wanted these young men to become part of them.

Let me just pause here for a moment listen to this. . .

Romans 12:2 (TPT): Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God's will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes.

We live in a society that wants us to conform to their belief system.

But church it is imperative that we stay consistent, live and act consistently how the Scriptures tell us to, not be willing to give in, or compromise what we know as truth.

Back to Daniel. . .

Daniel stood out. The king at the time, King Darius, noticed that Daniel lived an unusual life of consistency.

Consistency is attractive. King Darius understood that it was an attribute that helps build great leaders. And so king Darius thought, this is the kind of person I want to raise up and promote in my kingdom.

The problem was there were some other Babylonian leaders that didn't much care for Daniel. They saw this was a foreigner taking their spot, and they got a bit jealous of Daniel.

They decided it was time to do something about it. So, they went about trying to dig up some dirt and make sure he didn't take their position in the kingdom.

To make it more 21st century. . .they wanted Daniel cancelled

I don't know what they did, but let me try to put in 2023 terms.

They went to his best friend, asked his ex girlfriends, looked at his Facebook posts from years ago, the tweets he sent out years ago as well, his Instagram account to see if they could find any dirt, bad behavior, or character flaw in his life.

Daniel 6:4 (NLT): 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.

They said of Daniel, "He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy."

Those are powerful qualities. That's a legacy anyone could be proud of.

What was he? He was faithful, always responsible, and completely trustworthy.

What do you need to have to have those qualities? You need to have consistency.

And so these enemies who didn't want Daniel getting their job, said, "You know there's one thing we can go after. Daniel won't compromise his devotion to His God, so let's use that against him."

So, they go to the king. . .

Daniel 6:6–8 (NLT): So the administrators and high officers went to the king and said, "Long live King Darius! 7 We are all in agreement—we administrators, officials, high officers, advisers, and governors—that the king should make a law that will be strictly enforced. Give orders that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions. 8 And now, Your Majesty, issue and sign this law so it cannot be changed, an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked."

The king thinks what a great idea you guys let's do it and verse 9 tells us the king signed the decree.

And what do you think Daniel, who was faithful and consistent to God, did in that situation?

He decided well I guess I've given God enough it's time to compromise a bit God will understand I've been faithful. He knows the culture has shifted.

No that's not at all what he did. Verse 10 tells us,

Daniel 6:10 (NLT): 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.

That's consistency.

He prayed three times a day, just like he had always done, giving thanks to his God."

Daniel did what he always did. He pursued the heart of God as he had always done.

They went in celebrated thinking game over, got you now Daniel. Do not pass Go, do not collect \$200.

The next few verses tell us,

Daniel 6:11–13 (NLT): Then the officials went together to Daniel's house and found him praying and asking for God's help. 12 So they went straight to the king and reminded him about his law. "Did you not sign a law that for the next thirty days any person who prays to anyone, divine or human—except to you, Your Majesty—will be thrown into the den of lions?" "Yes," the king replied, "that decision stands; it is an official law of the Medes and Persians that cannot be revoked." 13 Then they told the king, "That man Daniel, one of the captives from Judah, is ignoring you and your law. He still prays to his God three times a day."

The king knew he had been tricked he liked Daniel the king even tried to find a way to save Daniel but a law is a law.

You know the story Daniel is thrown into the Lions den but God sends an angel who closed the mouths of the lions.

I love this watch this verse 23. . .

Daniel 6:23 (NLT): The king was overjoyed and ordered that Daniel be lifted from the den. Not a scratch was found on him, for he had trusted in his God.

Not a scratch was found on him. Why? Because he trusted in his God.

Let me pause once more and ask you a question. . .

When did Daniel learn to trust God?

It wasn't in the lions den it happened long before that in his prayer closet.

His faith in God was built on his knees, not in the battle. He learned long before battle ever knocked on his door.

He consistently sought after the heart of God, three times a day he went and spent time with Him. Day after day, week after week, month after month. He sought God.

Why is it that some of us are inconsistent with our relationship with God?

It's partly because we pray occasionally unlike Daniel who prayed consistently.

So how do we grow in our consistency?

I want to give you three thoughts. And we're going to determine in advance, determine today so that we are consistent tomorrow.

The first thought is this, start with the why.

Second thought give yourself grace to fail.

Third, realize it's a process.

Start with the why.

Here's another question to contemplate, why did Daniel pray consistently?

Let me tell you it was never about the outward appearance. It was the Pharisees who went, "Look how spiritual I am. I'm praying on the street corners, long prayers so you'll think I'm spiritual." Not Daniel.

Daniel three times a day went to pray because he was devoted to his God.

He decided that three times a day, he wanted to connect with the heart of God. It was born out of devotion.

That is the reason why so many New Year's resolutions fail it's because they're the result of desire, not devotion.

I love what comedian Michael Jr has to say about this. He says, so many times we ask about the what I'm I supposed to be doing, but you need to be asking about the why. Because when the why your what because more clear.

Let me just share Michael's video on why. . .

Show Michael Jr You Tube clip

Truth is church, If you don't have a compelling why, you're not likely to succeed.

The reason why I know most new Year's resolutions fail is because you don't really have a why.

If you have a real why, you're not going wait until January 1st to get started. It's not hey look it's only December 15th I can eat whatever, however, as much as ever.

Then January 1st comes and it's like, "Oh, look a salad."

It doesn't work that way. In about a week your back to fruity pebbles for breakfast. Why? Because the devotion wasn't as compelling as the desire and you never had a why.

If your doctor tells you in October, "You need to quit smoking or you're going to die in a month."

Your not going to wait and say, "well doc that was going to be my New Year's resolution so I'm just going to wait till then."

No, chances are you have a strong enough why to compel you to start after you leave his office.

If you want to grow in consistency, you need to start with the why.

Where do you wanna be more consistent? Where do you wanna grow?

Maybe your thinking, "Well, I wanna be closer to God." I by the way think that's great.

Someone else might say, "I wanna have a better marriage." Awesome.

Maybe it's, "I wanna have financial stability." "I wanna quit this bad habit."

Good on all those but, what is your why?

If your only reason you want to closer to God is because that's what your supposed to do as a follower of Jesus that desire alone won't keep you pursuing the things of God. But if you believe that God created you on purpose for a purpose and that you created by God to bring Him glory and be used to help others encounter Him. That will drive you to being devoted to getting to know Him, which will draw you closer to Him.

If your only reason you want a better marriage is because you think they are just a jerk and you deserve better. That desire alone will not get you a better marriage.

But if I want to get the help I need to have a better marriage so you I honor your vows, show the children and others around me how Jesus helps us overcome the obstacles and leave a legacy for my grandchildren of what faith in God is able to sustain. That drives me toward devotion.

I want to have financial stability so I can go on vacation, buy that new car, and have another pair of shoes in my closet. That's not a very good why.

But if your sick of living paycheck to paycheck, and want to stop wondering how your going to pay the next mortgage payment, or

electric bill. And you really want to be generous with what God has provided so you can be a blessing to those around you then that's a why that can drive you towards devotion.

The why moves it from desire to devotion.

I want quit this bad habit." Why? "'Cause it's expensive. No that's not a good why.

But when you realize that it's killing you and you want to spend more time with your grand kids, or break a family curse that has plague the family for years and you say it stops with me.

Now that's a real why.

It's the why when the king says you can't pray, Daniel says, "I need my God. Three times a day, I seek God in prayer." That's my why. I can't live without Him.

Church hear this when you want be consistent, you're going to have some obstacles, some resistance.

But listen, when you know your why, you will find a way.

My marriage needs God in the center, my financial future is dependent upon my why today, I need wisdom to serve you and this church for God's glory, I need to live right so I can leave a legacy of devotion to my children's children.

And when your values are clear, your decisions are easier.

If you want to become more consistent, define your why.

Daniel knew his why. His faith wasn't built in the lion's den, it was built in the prayer closet. Start with the why.

The second thing, and this is important, is you give yourself grace to fail.

Do you think Daniel ever missed one of his daily prayer times?

I can say with confidence I believe he probably did. How can I say that Scripture tells us he prayed three times a day it never says except Saturday before the sabbath in the year 650BC Daniel forgot. That is true it doesn't. Scripture also said David was a man after God's own heart but he slept with Bathsheba and had her husband killed. I don't think for a moment that was in God's perfect will either.

I think at one time or another the King asked Daniel to stay a little late and talk. And he missed that evening prayer time. Maybe the camels got stuck in traffic. Maybe some friends stopped my and they stayed up too late and he overslept and he missed his morning time by a few hours.

I don't know, but I'm pretty confident he missed a time or two. Why. Because he wasn't perfect, he's human and life happens.

Here's why I think so many of us are inconsistent. It's because we have an all or nothing mindset. Because if we fail one time, we think we are a failure. And by the way that is exactly what the enemy wants you to think.

I failed, so forget it.

Henry Ford had two bankruptcies before the Ford Motor company was successful.

Walt Disney was rejected more than 300 times before Mickey Mouse became a success.

Benjamin Franklin failed numerous times until he figured out electricity

And that's why we have to remember that being consistent isn't the same as being perfect.

You wanna give yourself grace to fail because chances are you will and you need to remember that being consistent is not the same as being perfect.

I remember when I first started fasting, oh by the way, I'm not consistent with that either, but when I first started if I walked by the homemade cookies Joy made. Oh wait, I didn't just walk by, I grabbed one and ate, then realize oh bummer I was fasting. I stopped the fast ate what I wanted said, I'll try again next week. Why? Because I didn't give myself grace to fail. Now if something like that happens I repent, say sorry and continue the fast.

Let me give you a little advice. I want you, God longs for you to spend time with Him. Everyday. And if you have been a bit inconsistent with that let me try and help you out.

You missed a day. Ok don't miss two. You don't read Scripture everyday, ok don't miss today. You don't pray everyday, ok don't miss two days in a row.

And if you have never done those things I believe you should start. Find they why and start and here's the advice start small.

Don't think you have to pray an hour start with 5 minutes, maybe you will do more but start where it is doable consistently. Read Scripture maybe not a whole book or even a whole chapter, but a few verses will get you started and help you be consistent.

See truth is church if you try and have a real lofty goal thinking I can do this for hours chances are pretty good you will never hit your knees or open the book. If it seems to impossible or far reaching you will probably not even try.

Maybe your 5 minutes will grow to an hour, maybe your few verses will turn to a few chapters. But if you want to start , and I pray you do, then make it easy enough that you will,

And if you miss a day, don't miss two. And at the same time allow yourself the grace to fail. It will help you get started knowing you don't have to be perfect.

But it will also help you be more consistent.

Understand that a momentary failure is part of the process.

And here's the problem for many of us.

It is the illusion of perfection that's keeping some of you from getting started.

"Well, I'll never be great at that, so I might as well not even try."

That can even include making the decision of following Jesus.

What if I mess up, Jesus won't be happy. What if I get mad and give that driver who cut me off the finger, what if I cuss out my co-worker because he's been a jerk.

If I can't do what's right I better not even get started. Remember what Paul told us. . .

Romans 7:15 (NLT): 15 I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate.

So, here's a fact for you, you probably will do something like that.

You might even be teaching a Bible study and think having a beer would be a good idea. Trust me it's not.

But don't let that stop you from starting. You want to follow Jesus.

Start today, if you haven't already, following Jesus. And if you are following Jesus but know you need to do better start today.

And I might add your not doing it for approval, you doing it because He approves.

You're not gonna be perfect. Don't confuse being consistent with being perfect.

Here's what we need to do, start with a why, give yourself grace to fail, and realize that it's a process.

Daniel wasn't praying because it was a duty? He simply loved the intimacy.

He wasn't praying for promotion, to get the applause of man.

He was just consistently living his life in a way that honored God.

The mistake so many of us make is we obsess about the goal. I have to lose 20 pounds. I have to pay off both credit cards. I've got to read through the whole Bible in a year.

Whatever the goal might be. And then we're inconsistent. And we feel like we don't succeed until we hit the goal, and honestly sometimes the goal doesn't happen as fast we would like. The path is more rocky than we anticipated, the opposition more harsh than we expected.

So, we don't obsess about the goal. Realize it's a process.

I know that if I'm consistent, I will make progress.

Your successful not when the goal is accomplished next month, next year. You're successful when you consistently honor God in everything you do starting with today.

That's when you're successful.

Paul said, "I don't even understand myself."

He asked a question later in the text, "Who can deliver me from sin and death"

And he said, "It's only Jesus."

He is the one who can empower us to live a life that honors God.

We determine in advance, and today is a good day for this, that with God's help, whatever it is for you. With God's help, I will walk three times a week. With God's help, I'm going read God's Word every day. I'm going to really pray everyday. I'm going to pray for that person in the store. Whatever it may be with Gods help. . .

Where is God calling you to be more consistent?

Take just a moment and open your heart. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you. Ask God, where do You want me to be consistent? Where could I honor You more? Be more faithful?

Maybe it's in your giving, your prayer time, the words you speak and how they are spoken, could it be your attitude, what you look

at or what you don't look at, the way you treat the people around you.

Let Him speak to you because He will speak to you and He'll show you the values that matter to Him and those same values should matter to you.

And when your values are clear, your decisions are easier.

Three times a day Daniel said, "I seek the Lord." I have determined to do it.

That's not going to happen by accident. It's a decision made ahead of time. Well before the opposition, the attack, or the ridicule.

You start with the why, you allow yourself grace to fail, and you realize it's a process.

So with God's help, may you honor Him in consistency in the area that brings Him glory and makes you more effective as His ambassadors, helping others encounter Him because you consistently live a life that gives Him glory and reverence, and the worship and praise that belongs to Him.

Prayer