Message 2: Stay Woke.

**INTRODUCTION**

Tupac Shakur is arguably one of the most “woke” artists known to date. His lyrics address issues within the African-American community and have been quoted, published in books, and spread across the world. Listen to a clip of Tupac’s critically acclaimed song, “Changes” or Read the following lyrics:

“I see no changes, all I see is racist faces

 Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races

 We under, I wonder what it takes to make this

 One better place, let's erase the wasted

 Take the evil out the people, they'll be acting right

 ‘Cause both Black and White are smoking crack tonight

 And the only time we chill is when we kill each other

 It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other”

Originally recorded in 1992, Tupac’s song paints a picture with words of the need for change amongst racial injustices. Conscious rap of the early 90s illuminated the brokenness of the world to modern society just as social media does today. This song is still relevant even in 2017 as we continue to see racism and “misplaced hate.”

Similarly, Daniel continued to face injustices as he lived marginalized in Babylon under different generations of governmental authorities.

**SUMMARIZE THE STORY OF DANIEL 6**

* Even though Daniel was a slave, he excelled above and beyond all others around him in the kingdom. King Darius loved him (6:3)
* Daniel prayed 3 times every day to the one true God. (6:10)
* However, the other administrators and satraps wanted to find a way to punish and kill Daniel, but he was not corrupt in any way. (6:4)
* READ v. 6-11
* These satraps created a law to ensnare Daniel exclusively.
* Even though King Darius liked Daniel, the satraps used the king’s own words to coerce him to throw Daniel in the den.
* READ v. 18-22
* In response to the injustice, King Darius actually put the satraps in the den and submitted a decree to praise Daniel’s God.
* READ v. 25-27

**TRANSITION**

Each major character illustrates a level of ‘social consciousness’ that we will discuss as we explore the significance of ‘Staying Woke’ to racial and social justice: the satraps, King Darius, and Daniel.

**MAIN POINTS**

1. ‘Asleep’ like the Satraps

When you are asleep, your body can only genuinely care about itself. It is highly unlikely that the purpose of your sleeping is to benefit others. (ref. 1 Thess 5:6-8) The Satraps were “sleeping.” They didn’t care anything about Daniel. They were searching for a trap to destroy him. (Daniel 6:4)

Self-righteous pride fuels hatred.

Ultimately the satraps created a law just so that Daniel could be killed (Daniel 6:6-9). They were motivated by their own self-righteous pride. Motivated by their own self-righteous pride, the satraps wanted to lawfully murder Daniel.

Even throughout the 21st century, this model of systemic injustice continues to be fueled by self-righteous pride, racism, and hatred. Michelle Alexander states in her book *The New Jim Crow*,

 *“We use our criminal justice system to label people of color ‘criminals’ and then engage
 in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against
African Americans.”*

Who are the ‘sleeping satraps’ of today?

The injustice system continues to target low income communities imprisoning black males. The law seems to only protect the law makers.

Philando Castile was pulled over as a part of traffic stop by Officer Yanez. The police dashcam videoshows that 40 seconds elapsed between when Yanez first started talking to Castile through the car window and when Yanez began shooting at him. According to the dashcam, after Yanez asked for Castile's driver's license and proof of insurance, Castile gave him his proof of insurance card, which Yanez appeared to glance at and tuck in his outer pocket. Castile then calmly informed Yanez: "Sir, I have to tell you that I do have a firearm on me."

Quoting the Star Tribune description of the next 13 seconds of the audio/video:

Before Castile completed the sentence, Yanez interrupted and calmly replied, 'OK', and placed his right hand on the holster of his own holstered

weapon. Yanez said, 'Okay, don't reach for it, then.' Castile responded, 'I'm not pulling it out,' and Reynolds also said, 'He's not pulling it out.' Yanez screamed, 'Don't pull it out!' Yanez quickly pulled his own gun with his right hand while he reached inside the driver's window with his left hand. Yanez removed his left arm from the car and fired seven
shots in the direction of Castile in rapid succession. Reynolds yelled, 'You just killed my boyfriend!' Castile moaned and said, 'I wasn't reaching for it.' Reynolds loudly said, 'He wasn't reaching for it.' Before she completed her sentence, Yanez again screamed, 'Don't pull it out!' Reynolds responded, 'He wasn't.'

* quoted from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Philando_Castile>

Immediately following, Castile’s girlfriend streamed the aftermath. Philando Castile’s death was ruled a homicide, stating he had sustained multiple gunshot wounds. ([Read the Medical Examiner form](https://content.govdelivery.com/attachments/MNHENNE/2016/07/07/file_attachments/582665/2016-3828%2BCastile%252C%2BPhilando.pdf)) On June 16, 2017, this homicide was justified when the officer was acquitted of all charges. The law seems to only protect the law makers.

Regardless of your opinion, Philando Castile was black man created in the image of God whose life was taken. And the entire world saw it happen.

Will you be like the satraps? Maybe you can turn a blind eye to the issues of this broken world because you have never been directly affected. Maybe you harbor racism and anger and want to cause more division.

Then you are still sleep.

**TRANSITION**

While the satraps were asleep, King Darius was “half-sleep” and on the brink of
“waking up.”

2. ‘Half-sleep’ like King Darius

King Darius exhibited a transformation throughout this passage. Even though he caused Daniel to be thrown in the lion’s den, he was still worried.

King Darius was in anguish and couldn’t sleep (6:18). Something drastic occurred causing him to change.

Pop culture has multiple examples of villains changing to heroes:

[Feel free to create your own list that may connect well to your audience; here are a few examples:

1. Star Wars: Darth Vader killed the Emperor and sacrificed his life, when his son Luke faced death.
2. Dragon Ball Z: Vegeta joined with Goku as the danger increased from the evil Frieza.
3. Despicable Me: Gru retired as a super villain when he became a father of three girls.
4. Power Rangers: The Green Ranger joined the Power Rangers after the Red Ranger broke the evil spell from Rita.]

Something dramatic occurred with each of these characters causing significant transformation. Maybe they were manipulated into doing evil, when suddenly a drastic event rang in their life like an alarm clock waking them up!

The alarm clock in my life started ringing, when … [state your personal testimony of how you met Jesus]

**EXAMPLE**
I had self-righteous pride, but then the world stop revolving around me.My dad became seriously ill; diagnosed with diabetes, high blood pressure, sudden loss of vision, and failed kidneys. In order to help around the house, I was homeschooled which allowed me to serve my dad meals and take care of his basic needs. I began to ‘wake up’ from my selfish pride as these events happened. As a twelve year old child
in homeschool, I witnessed first hand my Dad’s pain, sickness, and disease. I felt like King Darius. (Daniel 6:18-19) I couldn’t sleep and I wanted God to “rescue him” from this den of disease. I wanted my
Dad have his vision back.

The world stopped revolving around me, and I saw Jesus hold my Dad’s joy in the palm of His hand. My Dad’s smile flourished stronger even in the midst of the suffering. He was able to cry out like Daniel and say that the angel had shut the mouths of the lions that were meant to steal his joy. Jesus gave him peace

His attitude transformed my heart.

What is your ‘alarm clock’? The ‘alarm clock’ in your life may be the drastic events that happen directly to you. It could be the systemic injustice that plagues our society.

Maybe you have asked God why this has happened to you. Maybe you have asked why

does God allow these injustices to happen? God can use what was meant for evil to transform someone into good. God may be refining you in the fire. He is transforming you like He did with King Darius. I believe the reason why Daniel was thrown into the den was so that we can see God transform the heart of a ruler who had caused oppression.

A better world is possible.

**TRANSITION**

King Darius witnessed the hope of a better world by watching the rescue of Daniel.

3. ‘Woke’ like Daniel

Daniel was woke. He did not ignore the problems of the world, but rather pointed to the One who can bring peace. (Daniel 6:22). Daniel’s bold stance ultimately influenced King Darius to not only follow God, but also to continue to influence the entire culture (Daniel 6:26-27).

Daniel knew the one true God could rescue him, but he also wasn’t afraid of death. He continued to pray three times a day even after the decree was established! (Daniel 6:10).

Daniel’s “woke-ness” empowered him to take a stand against injustice, even if it would possibly cost his life.

In the same way, if we follow Jesus, it is essential we do not ignore the problems of this world. This world is broken and is impossible to fix on our own. Activism without the solution of Jesus can get very discouraging.

Just like Daniel stood against injustice even if it costed his life, Jesus continues to stand against injustice and He paid His life.

Even after the satraps tricked him, Daniel was still willing to risk his life! Jesus also willingly embraced death although he was rejected by others. This is the gospel.

[Share personal story of how Jesus motivated you to share the gospel with others]

Call to Faith

The kingdom of God is designed to stand up for justice in the midst of systemic injustice and division within certain earthly kingdoms. We can see the brokenness and pain within our world (Circle 2 – refer to injustice, brutality, death etc. left side of mural)

**THE GOSPEL**
We are all created in the image of God. He made us with purpose, dignity, and beauty. We were designed to live in peace with one another, enjoying the unique characteristics of every people group, and learning from one another, with God at the center of our relationships.

But that is not the world we are living in today. We thought we could do better if we put ourselves at the center of the story, shoving God to the side. The results have been disastrous. Today, our world is clearly divided and hurting. Our ethnic journeys include the story of this pain, past and present. The brokenness is not just external; it’s also within each of us. We carry scars from things that people have said, done, or not done to us. Our scars end up damaging others, causing more pain as we tolerate or even participate in systems that oppress people.

God did not turn away, leaving us stuck in our brokenness. Jesus took our personal sin and our world’s sin into the grave with him. He defeated and redeemed it by coming back to life, proving that death & destruction do not have the final say. Jesus came to heal us, to affirm the beauty of how he made us, and to free us from the damage of brokenness done to us and by us, by individuals and systems—and to pardon us for the part we’ve played in that mess. Our broken ethnic stories become healed and redeemed as we follow Jesus. He helps us embrace our ethnic stories and offers us new hearts and new love to reconcile with each other and work towards restoration.

As he heals us, he’s not satisfied with our individual transformation alone. Jesus leads us toward restoring relationships, repairing communities, and seeking justice. He breaks our chains of apathy, fear, and pain, and he sends us out to help break others’ chains as well. And he invites us to share God’s story of restoration with others. Our restored ethnic stories help bring healing and restoration to our communities and to our world. To follow Jesus is to trust him with our personal and collective pain and brokenness, and to trust that by defeating death, he has the power to make all things right.

**INVITATION TO RESPOND**

Let’s take some next steps in response to what we have been learning. Each of
us may be in a different place in how we connect our ethnic story and God’s

story. That is fine. No matter where we find ourselves today, God is inviting us to go deeper into his story of redemption. Which of these 3 invitations do you want to respond to?

1. The call to forgive. In Matthew 6:12, Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, “And forgive us our sins, as we also have forgiven those who have sinned against us.” (ISV). To experience
God’s forgiveness requires that we forgive others. Forgiveness is not optional as we follow Jesus. Which individuals and groups of people do you need to forgive?

2. The call to share this story of Jesus as Reconciler. We will take a moment and do 10

seconds of listening prayer. Please ask God who else around you needs to hear this message of hope? With whom can you share the gospel this week?

3. The invitation to adult faith in Jesus. Some of us are ready to make a new faith decision. Are you willing to say yes to following Jesus for yourself, to be healed, forgiven, and transformed by him in all of who you are, including your ethnic story. Will you say yes to him?

On the cross, Jesus paid for all the debts of the world. And because Jesus rose again, we can start over. If you are ready, please pray this prayer.

“God, I believe Jesus is your Son, the Savior of the world. I believe he died on the cross for me and took away all my sins, paying the cost for all of us. I believe in my heart that you raised Jesus from the dead and that he is alive today. I ask that you forgive me for the wrongs that I have done. I receive your forgiveness into my life. By faith I submit all parts of my life to Jesus as King. Please change me; make me the person you want me to be. I commit to being a member of your family on earth, pursuing your purposes and mission for the world. I give you my heart; I give you my life; I want to know you more! In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

*\*Have the Better World Pocket Proxe and script available with student leaders to
hand out.*

**ACTIVE RESPONSES**

Some of you who are already following Jesus have been “woke” to the issues of injustice in society. Some of you are just now “waking up.” And some of you still have questions about how God addresses injustice. Regardless, I invite all of us to share what we have learned this week. Invite the same friend you shared a meal with last week or someone new to walk through the Better World Pocket proxe. Share your personal testimony of how God helped you to “stay woke” with issues of injustice or how the story of Daniel is helping you in this process.