

26 "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. 27 He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." - Daniel 6:26-27 NIV

Daniel's 70 years in exile were a testament to God's power, mercy and faithfulness through his obedience and his public display of faith. The truth of God was so obvious that even a pagan king recognized it.

God was revealed through the way Daniel lived his life and how he worshiped God. God can also be revealed in the way we live our lives. Is there someone you know whose life serves as a witness of God's love, mercy and faithfulness? What are some of the daily opportunities we have to represent God to the world around us?

We may not feel called as evangelists, but we are all ambassadors of Christ. So let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

WRAP-UP

The story of Daniel in the lion's den highlights a life of faithfulness, integrity, and unwavering obedience to God, even while living in exile and under foreign rulers. Daniel remained committed to God despite cultural pressure, political danger, and threats to his life. His consistent faithfulness—from refusing the king's food to continuing to pray despite a death sentence—positioned him as a trusted leader and a powerful witness to God's presence and faithfulness. When Daniel was thrown into the lions' den, God protected him, demonstrating that He does not always remove us from trials but promises to be with us through them. Ultimately, Daniel's life revealed God so clearly that even a pagan king recognized and proclaimed God's power. Like Daniel, we are called to faithfully represent God through our everyday lives, allowing our actions, integrity, and worship to point others toward Him.

MEMORY VERSE

31 So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. -1Co 10:31 NLT

Challenge –

Remember this week that your life may be the only bible people ever read. Look for opportunities to shine a light on God's goodness.

The Oldies- Week 11 Daniel in the Lion's Den

INTRODUCTION

The story of Daniel in the lion's den takes place near the end of Daniel's life. Captured as a teenager, Daniel spent 70 years in exile. Although he was far from his homeland and the temple in Jerusalem, he remained faithful to God despite distance, threats and the pressure of the surrounding culture. His faithfulness did not include rebellion against his oppressors but rather it was a constant humble obedience to God's commands. Daniel served with integrity under several kings and two empires, ultimately distinguishing himself in a manner that brought glory to the God he served.

Ice Breaker

How do the people who know you well describe you? By your vocation, as a fanatic sports fan, a doting grandparent, an accomplished musician? What is it that marks you in the eyes of others?

Key Passage

10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. 11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." 13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." - Daniel 6:10-13 NIV

STUDY QUESTIONS

1 Faithfulness in Exile

4 This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. 6 Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. 7 Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

- Jeremiah 29:4-7 NIV

Daniel was taken captive to Babylon as a teen under King Nebuchadnezzar. But God had given the captives specific instructions concerning their exile.

Who did Jeremiah say carried Israel into exile? How were they to behave once they arrived? What attitude were they to have towards the place where they were taken? In Jeremiah 25:11 the people were told their captivity would last 70 years. How do you think this impacted their resolve to be faithful to God?

Daniel arrived in Babylon and was chosen, along with Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, because they demonstrated great potential to be valuable in the king's service. After changing their Hebrew names to Babylonian (Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego) the youths faced their first challenge; they were assigned 3 years of training and royal diets to prepare them for service.

8 But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way. ... 12 "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." ... 15 At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. ... 17 To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. ... 19 The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. ... 21 And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus. - Daniel 1:8, 12-13, 15, 17, 19, 21 NIV

Daniel was determined to faithfully observe the dietary law of the Jews. How did God respond to his faithfulness? How did this first act of faithfulness position Daniel and friends to serve God during their captivity?

In the face of exile God's people were distant from their land and from the temple, where they brought sacrifices and the priests interceded for them. In a foreign land they could lose their identity, power, family, and all hope. But as Daniel and others were faithful, God too was faithful. He had strengthened Daniel and friends and put them in places of influence where they would remain for the duration of the exile. We may experience times in our lives when God seems distant, but as we are faithful to Him we will find He is faithful to us.

2. Into the Lion's Den

*30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians, was slain, 31 and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two. - Daniel 5:30-31 NIV
3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. - Daniel 6:3 NIV*

Daniel had been a palace administrator over 60 years under the Babylonian empire when God brought that empire to an end and divided it between the Medes and Persians. As King Darius' reign began, once again Daniel found favor with the new king. Any time you entrust your future to an empire, you will realize that empires look very little like the Kingdom of God. The politics of the palace prevailed when the other officials conspired against Daniel. They devised a plan to discredit him and sentence him to death by deceiving the new king into making a decree that forbid prayers to anyone but himself.

10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. 11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands--in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." 13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." - Daniel 6:10-13 NIV

Daniel faced a death sentence for continuing to faithfully honor and serve God. What are examples of things the other people try to pressure or require us to do that would dishonor God? What do you find hard to do in front of people that you know you should do to please God?

More than 50 years earlier Daniel's friends faced a similar challenge to their faith. They were ordered to bow down and worship the statue of King Nebuchadnezzar or be tossed into a fiery furnace. They trusted God, defied his proclamation and found that God joined them in the fire and protected them from harm.

What was Daniel's act of defiance? If Daniel had prayed with the windows shut, would he still have been faithful to God? What did Daniel pray? (see Dan 9:4-19)

16 So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" ... 19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" 21 Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! 22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty." - Daniel 6:16, 19-22 NIV

Have you ever discovered God walking with you through a fiery furnace in your life? Why do you think God walks with us rather than delivering us from our trials?

Clearly Darius regretted that his edict condemned Daniel, and he recognized that God was Daniel's only hope. Daniel declared that God sent His Angel (*mal'ak*) to shut the lion's mouth. Unlike the balance of the Old Testament, most of the book of Daniel was written in Aramaic, a language commonly used in Babylon. And the Aramaic word *mal'ak* is used in only one other place- in the fiery furnace when God's Angel showed up with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Whether this was a messenger from God or an appearance of God Himself, is unclear. But there is no doubt that God was watching over Daniel.

3. The Fruit of a Faithful Life

After witnessing God's faithfulness and power, Darius issued a new decree: