**Scripture Reading:** Daniel 1:1-20
**Sermon Title:** You Got a Friend in Me: The 4 friends & The 4th man in the fire

**Allowing God to have more of us so that we can experience more of Him by allowing Him to shape our relationships.**

*The 4 in a foreign land:*
In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.[2] And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the articles from the temple of God. These he carried off to the temple of his god in Babylonia and put in the treasure house of his god. [3]Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, chief of his court officials, to bring into the king's service some of the Israelites from the royal family and the nobility— [4] young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians. [5] The king assigned them a daily amount of food and wine from the king's table. They were to be trained for three years, and after that they were to enter the king's service.-[6] Among those who were chosen were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.[7] The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego. [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. [9] **Now God had caused the official to show favor and compassion to Daniel**, [10] but the official told Daniel, "I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you." [11] Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, [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." [14] So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. [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. [16] So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead. [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. [18] At the end of the time set by the king to bring them into his service, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. [19] The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. [20] In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.
Daniel 1:1-20

**God is powerful enough to protect & prosper His people through difficult circumstances.**

This made the king so angry and furious that **he ordered the execution of all the wise men of Babylon.** [13] So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death. [14] When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and

tact. [15] He asked the king's officer, "Why did the king issue such a harsh decree?" Arioch then explained the matter to Daniel. [16] At this, Daniel went in to the king and asked for time, so that he might interpret the dream for him.
Daniel 2:12-16

"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. [21] He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. [22] He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. [23] I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors: You have given me wisdom and power, **you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king**."
Daniel 2:20-23

Then the king placed Daniel in **a high position and lavished many gifts on him.** He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men.[49] Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.
Daniel 2:48-49

**Then Nebuchadnezzar was furious with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and his attitude toward them changed. He ordered the furnace heated seven times hotter than usual [20] and commanded some of the strongest soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace**. [21] So these men, wearing their robes, trousers, turbans and other clothes, were bound and thrown into the blazing furnace. [22] The king's command was so urgent and the furnace so hot that the flames of the fire killed the soldiers who took up Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, [23] and these three men, firmly tied, fell into the blazing furnace. [24] **Then King Nebuchadnezzar leaped to his feet in amazement and asked his advisers, "Weren't there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?" They replied, "Certainly, Your Majesty." [25] He said, "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods."**
Daniel 3:19-24

Therefore I decree that the people of any nation or language who say anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego be cut into pieces and their houses be turned into piles of rubble, for no other god can save in this way." [30] **Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the province of Babylon.**
Daniel 3:29-30

Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, "Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed."[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!" [17] A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed.[18] Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without

any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. [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**." [23] The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.
Daniel 6:15-23

"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." [28] **So Daniel prospered** during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.
Daniel 6:26-28

**God often protects & prospers His people through His people.**

Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. [18] **He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery,** so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. [19] During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision.
Daniel 2:17-19

"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. [32] But **I have prayed for you**, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."
Luke 22:31

**Pray for & with your friends.**

*The 4 as models of healthy **friendship**:*
**Among those who were chosen** were some from Judah: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.[7] The chief official gave them new names: to Daniel, the name Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abednego.
Daniel 1:6-7

**Christians are family with every Christian but that doesn't mean they must be friends with them.**

This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other **people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon**.
Jeremiah 29:1

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to **all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon:**
Jeremiah 29:4

**Recover & celebrate the reality of God's sovereignty with your relationships.**

1. ***Be open*** *to God bringing relationships into your life you weren't looking for by keeping your heart open.*
2. ***Be attentive*** *to God bringing relationships into your life you weren't looking for by keeping your eyes peeled.*
3. ***Be appreciative*** *of God bringing relationships into your life you weren't looking for by celebrating & enjoying them.*

Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men.[49] Moreover, **at Daniel's request** the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.
Daniel 2:48-49

**Healthy friends look out for their friends.**

Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.
Daniel 2:17

**Healthy friends remind their friends of their truest identity.**

**Healthy friends strengthen each other's faith.**

*The 4 in* ***the fire****:*
Furious with rage, Nebuchadnezzar summoned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. So these men were brought before the king, [14] and Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the image of gold I have set up? [15] Now when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipe and all kinds of music, if you are ready to fall down and worship the image I made, very good. But if you do not worship it, you will be thrown immediately into a blazing furnace. Then what god will be able to rescue you from my hand?" [16] Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to him, "King Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. [17] If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, **the God we serve is able to deliver us from it, and he will deliver us from Your Majesty's hand. [18] But even if he does not,** we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up."
Daniel 3:13-18

**Jesus is the friend with us in the fire & refining our faith through the fire.**

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, [33] who through faith conquered kingdoms,

administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, [34] quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. [35] Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. [36] Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. [37] They were put to death by stoning; they were sawed in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated— [38] the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground.
Hebrews 11:32-38

**Develop godly friendships.**

1. ***Ground*** *them in the gospel—who Jesus is, what Jesus is doing, and what He's promised to do.*
2. ***Cultivate*** *spiritual practices for and with them—fasting, serving, and resting together.*
3. ***Be*** *a life-giving presence.*