

Staying Power: Fireproof

Daniel 3

Small Group Discussion

Intro questions (try to give everyone a chance to answer, at least for the first one):

- If there were a fire in your home, what two items (not counting people or pets) would you be sure to rescue before fleeing?
- What does it mean to be “fireproof” in life?
- Do you know anyone whose faith in God has stayed strong, and who remained full of joy instead of bitterness, even through difficult seasons of testing? How did they do it?

Recap chapter 2: (If someone in your group has read it recently, let them summarize. Otherwise you can read the following, as it is important for the understanding of this week’s story.) *In chapter 2, the king had a very troubling dream, and he asked all of his wise men to not only interpret it, but to tell him what he dreamed. God revealed the dream and its meaning to Daniel. The dream was of a very large statue, with a head of gold, and the rest of the body made of lesser materials. A stone comes along in the dream, and destroys the statue. Daniel tells Nebuchadnezzar that the head of gold represented him, and the other non-golden parts represented kingdoms that would replace him, and the stone that destroyed the statue was the kingdom of God, which would last forever. The king is so pleased, that he promotes Daniel to an extremely high role, practically #2 in Babylon. Daniel then promotes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to high, governing positions in Babylon.*

READ Daniel 3:1-15, then discuss the following.

- What initially jumps out at you about King Nebuchadnezzar’s statue, and the practices surrounding it?
- Why do you think that some of the terms are repetitive (i.e., musical instruments, governing titles, etc.)?
- What do you think that the statue represented? What role did it play in Nebuchadnezzar’s psyche, or sense of meaning?
- Remembering how Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego engaged wholeheartedly with the Babylonian culture, why did they draw a line here, and refuse to bow down?
- What do you notice about Nebuchadnezzar’s anger in this passage? What might that tell you?
- Pastor Josh suggested that for Nebuchadnezzar, people’s praise of him is most vital to his sense of meaning. Do you agree or disagree?
- Building on this observation, do you agree that **we all have something that is most vital to our meaning in life**? How does our anger or defensiveness shed light on this?
- In your past, have you ever noticed yourself elevating some good gift to the place that it becomes an item of ultimate meaning to you (such as children, like romantic lovers, jobs, fitness, or beauty)? What brought this fact to your attention?
- What does this principle have to do with *staying power*, or being *fireproof*?

READ Daniel 3:16-23, then discuss the following.

- What do you notice about the three young men's response to the king, in vv. 16-18? What does this response tell you about what they hold most dear?
- What does the king's response to them show you in this section? What contrast do you see between him and the three young men?
- How can **the "furnaces" in life expose what we hold most dear?**
- How is it possible to *use* God to get what is most vital to our meaning in life, rather than love God for himself?
- Here we see that **we will only have staying power when we treasure God himself more than anything else.** What does this mean? How do we do this?
- Is there any "furnace" in your life right now, that is testing and/or revealing about your love for God, and his meaning in your life?

Read Daniel 3:24-28, then discuss the following.

- How can God become what you treasure most, so that you love him for his own sake?
- Who do you think the fourth person in the fire is? *(Leaders, Pastor Josh said the following: It's certainly some kind of heavenly, supernatural being. Nebuchadnezzar adds in v. 28, it is "God's angel who rescued his servants." This is not just any angel, who is a servant of God, less than God, like Gabriel, who we see later in Daniel. This is God's angel, the angel of God. Whenever we see that angel in Scripture, the angel of the LORD, it tends to be a theophany: God himself. God himself enters the furnace and neutralizes the heat of the flames so that they don't burn a single hair on the men's heads, they don't even smell like smoke or fire. They're fireproof.)*
- What role would Isaiah's words, in Isaiah 43:1-2, have played for the three young men in this incident?
- How is fire symbolic of God's judgment? Can you think of any examples in Scripture?
- Jesus was the ultimate "theophany," or "God in the fire." How was the experience of Jesus on the cross a much greater furnace than what the three men experienced here?
- Pastor Josh said, "**When we see Jesus in the fire for us, he becomes most vital to our meaning.**" How does this work?
- How did Jesus' experience in the "furnace" reveal what was most precious to him?
- Timothy Keller says, "You will only be able to feel God *with* you in the furnace if you see Jesus going into the furnace of God's judgment *for* you." What does this mean? Have you experienced it to be true?

Share and pray

- If any current "furnace" experiences are happening in the lives of people in your group, be sure to pray for them.
- Spend some time praising Jesus for the love he showed in the "furnace."