

JANUARY 21, 2024

2.3

TRUTH ABOUT GOD

God's favor in my life is not dependent on ideal circumstances.

TRUTH FOR MY LIFE

I will trust God to deliver me from my trials.



SERIES 2: GOD IS FAITHFUL

STANDING TALL ON HIS KNEES



FOCUS VERSE: Daniel 6:10

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

LESSON TEXT: Daniel 6:10-13, 16-28

Lesson Title: Standing Tall on His Knees

Icebreaker: When have you had to stand for your faith in the face of persecution or ridicule?

I. DANIEL'S SUCCESS

A. Daniel's Excellent Spirit

» *How can you demonstrate an excellent spirit in your daily life?*

B. God's Favor

C. Faithful Obedience Brings God's Blessings

II. DANIEL'S PERSECUTION

» *How could faithfulness lead to persecution or other problems?*

A. Darius's Decree

B. Daniel's Response

C. Faithful Obedience Brings Worldly Resistance

» *How could you develop more consistency in your personal spiritual habits?*

III. DANIEL'S DELIVERANCE

A. Darius's Love for Daniel

» *What are some ways God has given you favor with others?*

B. God's Miraculous Intervention and the Aftermath

C. I Will Trust God to Deliver Me from My Trials

» *What is something you need to trust the Lord for right now?*

Prayer Focus

Lead the group in prayer and consider the following topics of focus:

- Pray we will recognize God's favor at work in our lives.
- Ask God to help us trust Him during our trials.

BIBLICAL OVERVIEW

Lesson Text: Daniel 6:10-13, 16-28

Daniel 6 continues the saga of the Hebrews who lived faithfully despite being in exile in a strange land. Daniel 5:28-31 records the quick transition of power as Babylon was conquered and overtaken by the Medes and Persians. Even though the power had shifted between kingdoms, the Israelites still found themselves in captivity, unable to do as they pleased.

Because of Daniel's success under Babylonian rulers Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, Daniel found himself elevated to the second highest position in the newly formed Median and Persian government, not unlike Joseph's meteoric rise in Egypt centuries earlier (Genesis 39-41). Both Daniel and Joseph stand as testimonies to the possibilities of blessing even while in dire circumstances if we put our complete faith in God.

Daniel is recorded as having an "excellent spirit" (Daniel 6:3), which is one of the reasons Darius promoted him. This fact is incredible, considering the totality of Daniel's experience. He was living under a wicked king in Judah when he was carried away to Babylon to be a slave. He faced the possibility of death when he refused to eat Nebuchadnezzar's meat and when he was the only one who could interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dream. (See Daniel 1-2.) Daniel's friends were almost martyred when they refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's idol. Furthermore, Daniel witnessed a brutal takeover of Babylon by the Medes and Persians and found himself still in exile under a new government. Yet through it all, Daniel maintained an "excellent spirit."

King Darius took a liking to Daniel and his excellent spirit. Darius was also heartbroken when he was tricked into condemning Daniel to almost certain death. However, just like God had previously delivered the faithful Hebrews from certain death multiple times in the Book of Daniel, God once again demonstrated He was more powerful than any pagan king's decree.

The trickery of the people jealous of Daniel in Darius's kingdom backfired on them as God shut the mouths of the lions and saved the life of His prophet Daniel. Finally, Daniel's critics eventually suffered the same sentence they attempted to serve Daniel. God once again demonstrated that He stands for them who stand for Him.

BOTH DANIEL AND JOSEPH STAND AS TESTIMONIES TO THE POSSIBILITIES OF BLESSING EVEN WHILE IN DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES IF WE PUT OUR COMPLETE FAITH IN GOD.

DAY 1

Daniel 6:10-13

¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

¹¹ Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

¹² Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

¹³ Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

Biblical Insight

Daniel's response to Darius' decree was similar to the three Hebrews' response in Daniel 3. Both responses were bold and publicly visible. These men were convicted of their principles; death was not an intimidating deterrent. Additionally, Daniel's window being open toward Jerusalem was not mandated anywhere in Scripture. He could have prayed with the window shut for his own safety. However, it is possible his window was not open primarily so others could see in, but so he could see out. Perhaps, like the exiled psalmist, Daniel was determined not to forget Jerusalem lest his hands and tongue lose their abilities (Psalm 137:5-6).

Daily Devotion

One result of the Russian Revolution was the displacement of the royal family, the Romanovs. Family members were scattered across the globe, including Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. As an exile, she had only one marketable skill—embroidery.

Maria began designing clothes inspired by traditional Russian folk art. After being introduced to Coco Chanel, Maria set up the Parisian embroidery house of Kitmir. She was pressured by high society to abandon her Russian influences, but she refused. Maria strongly believed if she stopped embroidering Russian-inspired art, she would forget Russia and her identity as Russian.

Like Daniel, Maria Pavlovna was intentional not to lose her identity while living in a foreign culture. As Christians, we also live in a foreign culture. The culture of the world is fallen, dark, and self-serving. In what ways are you protecting your identity as a child of God while living in the world's culture?

Reflection and Prayer
» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 2

Daniel 6:16-17

¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

¹⁷ And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Biblical Insight

Darius' statement in verse 16 demonstrated unusual faith for a man who had just signed a decree that everyone should pray to him alone for thirty days. However, Daniel was functionally Darius' right-hand man, one of the only rulers in the kingdom who reported directly to Darius (Daniel 6:1-3). It is unlikely Darius and Daniel could have spent that much time together without Darius becoming keenly aware of the depth and passion of Daniel's convictions.

Daily Devotion

In AD 625, Princess Ethelburga's marriage to King Edwin was a political alliance between the Christian kingdom of Kent and the pagan kingdom of Northumbria. Remaining true and consistent in her beliefs while living in a pagan kingdom, Ethelburga was recognized as a woman of prayer and unconditional love. When she went into early labor, King Edwin found himself praying to Jesus for the first time.

Soon after his wife and daughter's recovery, King Edwin was baptized, declaring that Christianity offered something more certain than paganism: love, goodness, light, and the Savior of the world. Because of his wife's convictions and faithfulness amid a perverse culture, Edwin became the first Anglo-Saxon king to turn to Jesus as Savior. The way Ethelburga lived day-to-day influenced those closest to her, and they too came to know Jesus.

Are those closest to you learning more about Jesus by the way you live?



Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 3

Daniel 6:18-20

¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of musick brought before him: and his sleep went from him.

¹⁹ Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

²⁰ And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?

Biblical Insight

Daniel intentionally noted Darius refused to be soothed by music. The king received no “diversions” (ESV) or “entertainment” (NIV). This situation must have been unusual to have garnered a textual note in Scripture. Music played a significant role during Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (Daniel 3:5, 15), and centuries earlier, music soothed Saul when the evil spirit troubled him (I Samuel 16:23). Darius also fasted food, which might have been an imitation of Daniel’s fasting meat in Daniel 1, but this reference might simply have indicated Darius was too distressed about Daniel’s safety to take time to eat.

Daily Devotion

Our minds like distraction. According to psychologists, distraction allows us to delay moments of truth. Distraction is a form of procrastination that stems from an inner desire to protect ourselves. Instead of showing who we are, reflecting upon our actions, proving ourselves, or facing reality, we scroll through social media, listen to music, or find other ways to procrastinate.

Distraction keeps us from facing others and ourselves. It keeps us from trying and failing. It keeps us numb. Ultimately, distraction stagnates us because we cannot progress in our jobs, accomplish our goals, or grow spiritually.

King Darius refused to be preoccupied by entertainment. Because he refused music and food, he was not distracted. He was able to fully realize his errors and genuinely repent. Upon reflection, what are ways you distract yourself? What are you distracting yourself from? How can you pull away from distractions to get alone with God?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 4

Daniel 6:21-24

²¹ Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

²² My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

²³ Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

²⁴ And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces or ever they came at the bottom of the den.

Biblical Insight

Daniel called out to Darius with a common greeting to royalty: "O king, live for ever." (See Daniel 2:4; 3:9; 5:10; 6:6.) Notably, Daniel's respectful address is the first recorded in Daniel coming from a Hebrew speaking to a Gentile ruler; none are recorded coming from Hebrew lips to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 1-4) or Belshazzar (Daniel 5).

In verse 24 we see God not only protected Daniel, but God also caused Daniel's enemies to be destroyed in the same manner they wished upon him. God is not only a God of mercy and protection; He is also a God of justice.

Daily Devotion

In 1972, twenty-six-year-old Richard Phillips was sentenced to life in prison when he was convicted of armed robbery and first-degree murder. Phillips had been set up by someone he once called his friend. The justice system failed to discover his innocence. In prison, bitter, angry, and lonely, Phillips wrote his first poem about his desire to kill the man who betrayed him. Then he felt God tell him, "Don't kill him because then you will be guilty."

Phillips was given the opportunity to lessen his sentence if he confessed to the crime he was convicted of. He replied, "I'd rather die in prison than admit to something I didn't do." At the age of seventy-one, Phillips was found innocent and released from prison.

As with Daniel, Richard Phillips found himself in a situation that tempted him to sacrifice his integrity for relief. Both men valued their integrity over their comfort. Do you?

Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*

DAY 5

Daniel 6:25-28

²⁵ Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.

²⁶ I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

²⁷ He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

Biblical Insight

Daniel 6 ends similarly to chapters 3 and 4. In the previous passages, we find Nebuchadnezzar waxing poetic over the power and magnitude of Jehovah, the only true God. Years later, Darius received the same revelation. Both kings stand in sharp contrast to the kings of Judah and Israel, who rebelled continually against the one true God even until Babylon came knocking down their walls.

Daily Devotion

Frumentius was traveling from his Phoenician city of Tyre along the Red Sea coast when he was captured and sold into slavery. The Greek teacher soon found himself as the tutor to Ezana II, the crown prince of the Aksum empire in present-day Ethiopia. Recognizing that God had positioned him to do more than teach a future king reading and arithmetic, Frumentius taught Ezana about Jesus. After Ezana II was crowned king in AD 340, he converted to Christianity. Aksum was the first Christian empire in Africa.

Would King Darius and King Nebuchadnezzar have acknowledged the one true God if Daniel had always complained about his exile? Would Frumentius have been an effective teacher of Christianity if he had felt abandoned by God because of his enslavement? The way the men conducted themselves during hardship impacted empires. Your conduct during hardship can impact eternities.



Reflection and Prayer

» *What can you do to apply this principle to your life today?*
