

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 1.28.2024

FAITH IN THE FURNACE— DANIEL 3:1-30

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Pastor Daniel tells us, "While we would all rather avoid them, trials and difficulties are an unfortunate and unavoidable reality in this life. Furthermore, as you read your Bible, you'll discover that trials play a key role in the growth and development of our faith. Perhaps that's why God allows those things in our lives. He knows that a faith that has not been tested can't be trusted. Since God is all about growing our faith, He will sometimes allow us to face hardships." Let's get into our lesson. For Daniel's three closest friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the great trial of their lives came in the form of a fiery furnace."

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you most from the Pastor Daniel's sermon?
2. Who do you think is the most courageous person in the history of our country? Why?
3. How do you think your life would be different if you were more courageous?

We have all heard stories of courage in the face of danger or death and some of us have such stories of our own. We all question at times though the depth of our courage when it comes to our lives in Christ. Today we are going to discuss the story of Daniel's friends standing firm for their convictions even when threatened by fire. We may never be faced with the choice to worship a golden statue or be burned alive, but the lesson of courage from Daniel 3 is relevant nonetheless for those of us who long to develop courage that stands when threatened.

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 3:1-7

1. Who did Nebuchadnezzar call on to worship his statue? Why do you think he chose those people?
2. What was their motivation for worshipping the golden image? What should be our motivation for worship?

Nebuchadnezzar demanded that people worship what he thought worthy of worship. He built a 90-foot golden statue of a Babylonian god. He called the leaders in the empire to come and worship the statue, believing that if the leaders worshipped, so would everyone else. They did not worship because they believed in the statue as a god. They worshipped out of fear for their lives. Death by fiery furnace was a strong motivator.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 3:8-18

1. Why do you think the Chaldeans told Nebuchadnezzar about the Jews not following?
2. Read Daniel 2:49. Why were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego called before the king? How could this have impacted their courage to stand for their convictions? Have you been in a similar situation in your career? What happened?

3. How did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego have courage when facing the furnace? Why could they stand with integrity in this way?

The Chaldeans likely told Nebuchadnezzar about the Jews because they wanted to be superior to the Jews in Nebuchadnezzar's empire. Daniel had just been assigned a position in the king's court and other Jews were becoming influential as well. Some of these Jews were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who were put over some affairs of the empire at the request of Daniel. Nebuchadnezzar would not like his newly appointed leaders failing to follow orders. However, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego courageously stood in their faith because they trusted God and would not worship anyone or anything other than Him. God was greater than their fears, and He is greater than our fears today.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ DANIEL 3:19-30

1. What was Nebuchadnezzar's response to the courageous stand of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Do you think it was best for the three Jews that the king did not back off from his threat? Why or why not?
2. How did God protect Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Why did He protect them?
3. Who was the fourth person in the furnace? How can this truth help you in your own threatening environments?

Nebuchadnezzar did not care for disobedience and, in his rage, ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual. It consumed the men who threw in Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. God protected the Jews with His power and presence. A fourth person was seen in the furnace with them. This was almost certainly Jesus coming to their aid even in the Old Testament.

Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

Perhaps you feel like you're in a fiery furnace right now through no fault of your own. What should you do? Trust God. He is able to deliver you from the flames, and He will deliver you through your trial. But even if He doesn't do it in the way you want, determine that you are going to follow Him no matter what.

1. What things of the world are you most tempted to bow to? Why? What steps can you take to help you develop courage that stands firm?
2. Why is courage important even when standing in front of someone who has a superior position to us?
3. Is there an area in your life right now where your courage could benefit others? How?
4. Who in your life is struggling to have courage? How can you encourage them?

PRAYER: Close your time in prayer, asking that God would be worshipped at our church and that your group would have the courage stand for Him instead of the things of the world. Pray that your group will be people of integrity and courage in a lost and threatening world.

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." {Philippians 1:21}