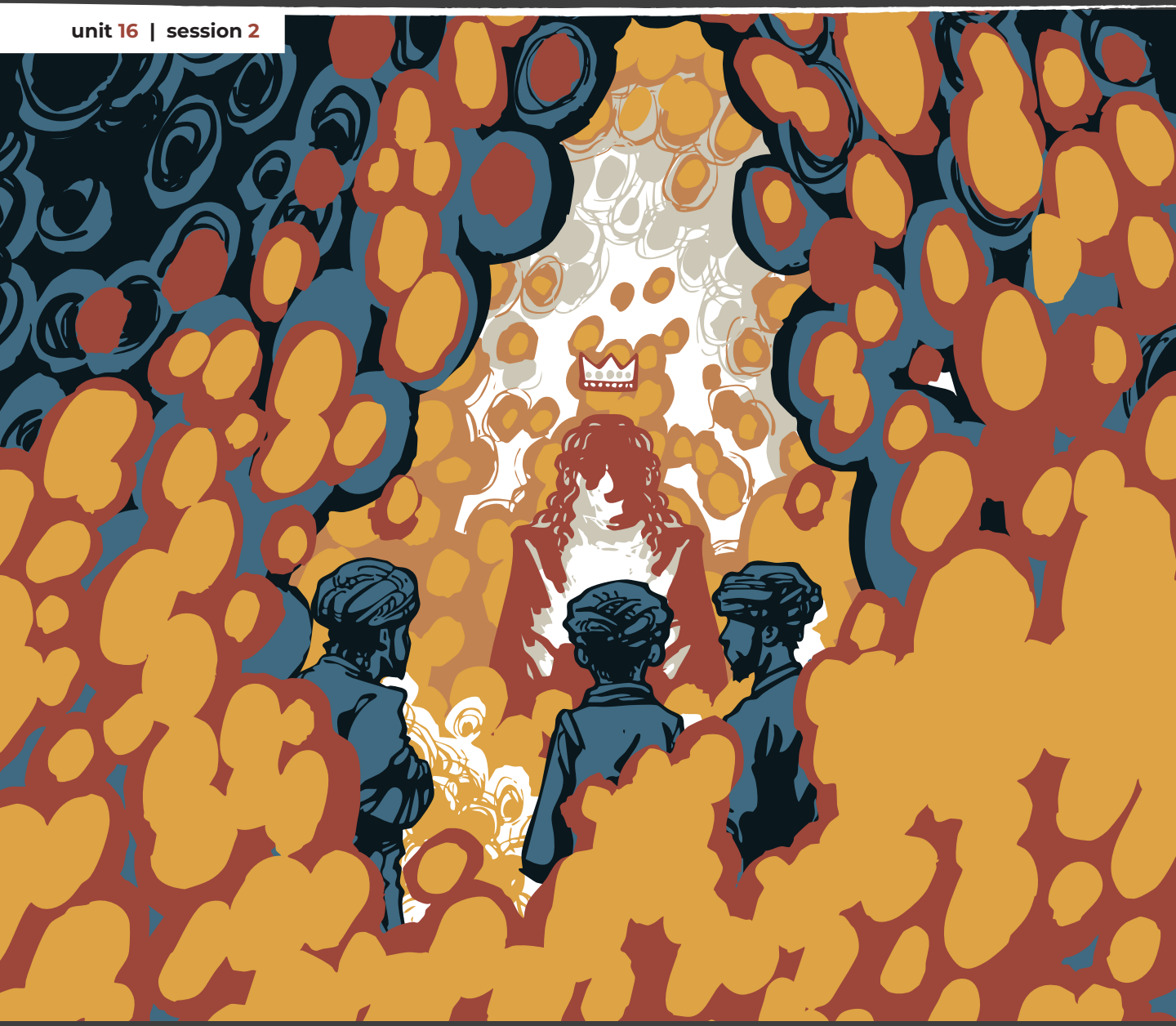
OUT OF *THE FIRE*

unit 16 | session 2



CHRIST CONNECTION

The same God who was all-powerful, faithful, and present with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the flames will also deliver us through His Son—who is with us in the fiery trials of life and who saves us from the punishment for our sin.

EVEN IF . . .

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to dig in and read all of the content on this timeline.

Daniel 3–4

FAITHFULNESS WILL COST US

DANIEL 3:4-6,14-18

4 A herald loudly proclaimed, "People of every nation and language, you are commanded:
5 When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, drum, and every kind of music, you are to fall facedown and worship the gold statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. 6 But whoever does not fall down and worship will immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire." . . . 14 Nebuchadnezzar asked them, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, is it true that you don't serve my gods or worship the gold statue I have set up? 15 Now if you're ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, drum, and every kind of music, fall down and worship the statue I made. But if you don't worship it, you will immediately be thrown into a furnace of blazing fire—and who is the god who can rescue you from my power?"
16 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to the king, "Nebuchadnezzar, we don't need to give you an answer to this question. 17 If the God we serve exists, then he can rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he can rescue us from the power of you, the king. 18 But even if he does not rescue us, we want you as king to know that we will not serve your gods or worship the gold statue you set up."

FAITHFULNESS POINTS PEOPLE TO JESUS

DANIEL 3:24-29

24 Then King Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in alarm. He said to his advisers, "Didn't we throw three men, bound, into the fire?" "Yes, of course, Your Majesty," they replied to the king.
25 He exclaimed, "Look! I see four men, not tied, walking around in the fire unharmed; and the fourth looks like a son of the gods." 26 Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and called, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, you servants of the Most High God—come out! " So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire.
27 When the satraps, prefects, governors, and the king's advisers gathered around, they saw that the fire had no effect on the bodies of these men: not a hair of their heads was singed, their robes were unaffected, and there was no smell of fire on them. 28 Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel and rescued his servants who trusted in him. They violated the king's command and risked their lives rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. 29 Therefore I issue a decree that anyone of any people, nation, or language who says anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego will be torn limb from limb and his house made a garbage dump. For there is no other god who is able to deliver like this."

MAIN POINT.

Even when our faithfulness is risky, God is able to deliver us.

THEOLOGY *CONNECTION*

SANCTIFICATION

Sanctification is the process, beginning in regeneration (being given new life, salvation), by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes and is enabled to grow in spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him or her. Growth in grace should continue throughout the believer's life.

DISCUSSION

FAITHFULNESS WILL COST US

DANIEL 3:4-6,14-18

- **Nebuchadnezzar knew the Hebrew men worshiped God, so what was his problem with them?**
- **What did the men believe about God? How do our beliefs about God affect our willingness to stand?**
- **Why do we doubt God if He allows us to remain in the fire—struggles, pain, or suffering? How can we trust Him "even if" (v.18) we suffer?**

FAITHFULNESS POINTS PEOPLE TO JESUS

DANIEL 4:24-29

- **How did God use the men's faithfulness? When have you seen God use yours or someone else's?**
- **Who is the fourth man in the fire (v. 25)?**
- **Where do you see evidence in the passage that Nebuchadnezzar's heart hadn't changed?**

READ 3:19-23. HOW CAN YOU STAND FOR GOD WHEN YOU ALSO STAND TO LOSE SOMETHING IN THE PROCESS?

CULTURAL *CONNECTION*

Why does it matter that you have a right understanding of who God is? For instance, if you simply believe He is real, He created all things, and He sent Jesus to save us from our sin, then isn't that enough? First, these are important foundational truths for sure. But, if this is all you know about God, then you may be vulnerable when life hurts. In fact, the reason so many believers fail to stand boldly is because they know so little about God beyond these basic truths. Here's why it's so important to have a good understanding of God's character: When you know God and understand His good character, then you'll never imagine not trusting Him. When you know God intimately, then you'll live boldly and courageously. Why? Because His character is unfailing. He is steady, unchanged by your circumstances. When you know Him—really know Him—you'll be able to endure pain and loss yet remain faithful. Your circumstances, even when they hurt, will only drive you toward God and not away from Him. The best part? You get to know Him. You could spend the rest of your life getting to know Him and still have more to discover. Do the work. Discover God through His Word, and never stop.

DAY ONE

MATTHEW 10:16-22

Do you think only some Christians will face persecution or every follower of Jesus? Jesus told His disciples that everyone will hate them because of Him (Matt. 10:22). But why? Why would we be hated for following Jesus and telling others about him? Daniel 3 provides insight into why people hate us when we seek to live faithfully for Jesus. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were persecuted because they refused to acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as a god. Nebuchadnezzar's issue wasn't that they worshiped the Lord, but that they worshiped the Lord alone and no one else. For the same reason, the disciples faced persecution for following Jesus.

People are often okay with "private religion." However, when we proclaim the truth that Jesus is the *only* way of salvation, people may accuse us of being unloving, narrow-minded bigots or radicals. The New Testament treats persecution as a regular occurrence for followers of Jesus, using the word "persecute" fifty-two times in connection with believers.[1] Paul even said that all people who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus *will* be persecuted (2 Tim. 3:12). Paul's statement raises a question: Can we live a godly life and *not* face any form of persecution? The answer seems to be no. If we've never faced any form of persecution for our faith in Christ, we may not be living boldly for Christ. The world may not hate us because our lives don't look any different (John 15:18-19). Resolve today to be holy and set apart from the world in your speech, actions, and thoughts. Know that at times, your friends, family, and others will hate you because of Jesus, but also know that the Holy Spirit is with you, helping you to remain faithful.

- **WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BE PERSECUTED AS A STUDENT WHO FOLLOWS JESUS?**
- **WHY DOES LIVING A GODLY LIFE LEAD TO PERSECUTION? IS IT POSSIBLE TO WALK FAITHFULLY WITH JESUS AND NEVER BE PERSECUTED? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

PRAY

FATHER, HELP ME NOT TO ALLOW A FEAR OF PERSECUTION STOP ME FROM LIVING FOR YOU. PLEASE STRENGTHEN ME BY THE GRACE OF CHRIST TO BE A BOLD WITNESS FOR YOUR GLORY.

DAY TWO

MATTHEW 10:26-31

Jesus promised that His disciples would be persecuted (Matt. 10:23-25). No disciple is above his or her teacher. So, if they called Jesus the "prince of demons," what will they call us? Yet, Jesus knows our weakness and understands that we need encouragement to bear this burden. That is why Jesus is so amazing. He is our great High Priest who can sympathize with, or understand, our weakness. He provides mercy and grace for us to endure times of suffering and persecution for His sake. Jesus tells us not to fear those who will persecute us because their power is nothing compared to the mighty hand of God. People who persecute us can only end our earthly lives, but they have no power to destroy our souls; their power is temporary.

Jesus said the cure for fearing people is to fear the Lord. This does not mean we are afraid of God like we are of spiders or heights. Fearing the Lord is a holy reverence—a holy respect—and honor for the Lord. We love God so much that we don't want to dishonor Him; rather, we aim to please Him in all we say and do. We fear God because we know that He loves and cares for us. Jesus explained that if the Father cares for a small sparrow, then how much more does He care for human beings made in His own image (Matt. 6:26)? We don't need to fear our persecutors because they can do nothing without receiving permission from our loving heavenly Father. We can rest in Christ, knowing our suffering is for the gospel and for God's glory.

- **WHY IS IT COMFORTING TO KNOW NOTHING WILL HAPPEN TO US UNLESS GOD ALLOWS IT?**
- **WHY DOES JESUS TELL US TO FEAR GOD? HOW ARE FEAR AND LOVE CONNECTED? WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO WALK IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD EACH DAY?**

PRAY

FATHER, I PRAISE YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE IN CONTROL OF ALL THINGS. THANK YOU FOR CARING FOR ME AND FOR NEVER FORSAKING ME. PLEASE HELP ME OVERCOME MY FEAR OF WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO TO ME, KNOWING YOU ARE ALWAYS WITH ME.

DAY THREE

MATTHEW 10:32-39

What if you had the opportunity to receive $1 million? Would you take it? It sounds like a no-brainer, right? However, to receive $1 million, you must give up all your earthly relationships and confine yourself to a house for the rest of your life. What would you do? Although $1 million is a huge sum, many of us would likely decline the offer. Why? Because we recognize the value of human relationships with our family, friends, and future spouse. Given the treasure of these relationships, we'd be willing to skip $1 million because it isn't worth the loss. Similarly, when we choose to follow Jesus and our lives are transformed by the gospel, we're willing to acknowledge Him before others through both our words and actions. We won't fear the persecution we might face or the losses we could endure because our treasure is Jesus, and abundant life is in Him. Jesus said that if we try to save or find our life, we will lose it. If we decide to live for ourselves by seeking our purpose, value, and identity in possessions, popularity, dating relationships, sports, or academic success, we will lose our souls for eternity. However, when we see Jesus as the treasure and our only means of salvation from sin, we'll willingly let go of temporary pleasures to gain the eternal treasure of Jesus.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego understood this principle and were willing to give up their lives to acknowledge Yahweh before King Nebuchadnezzar. They refused to bow to the gold statue because they knew that true gold is found in following God. What about you? Are you willing to die to yourself? Are you willing to let go of earthly pleasures to find your life in Christ? Who is your treasure?

- **HOW ARE YOU ACKNOWLEDGING CHRIST WITH YOUR WORDS AND YOUR WORKS BEFORE OTHERS?**
- **WHAT ARE YOU TEMPTED TO "FIND YOUR LIFE IN" OTHER THAN JESUS? HOW CAN SEEING JESUS AS THE TREASURE HELP YOU LOOSEN YOUR GRIP ON THESE THINGS?**

PRAY

FATHER, PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR THE TIMES I HAVEN'T LIVED LIKE JESUS IS THE TREASURE. PLEASE REVEAL YOUR GLORY TO ME THROUGH CHRIST, SO I CAN HAVE THE BOLDNESS TO PROCLAIM JESUS TO MY FRIENDS.

DAY FOUR

1 PETER 3:8-17

Growing up, we often believe that if we do the right thing and treat others with kindness, then we'll be rewarded and make many friends. While this may be true at times, Peter, writing to the exiles in Asia, stated that we can still suffer as Christians even when we do what is right: "Who then will harm you if you are devoted to what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed" (1 Pet. 3:13-14). Even when we suffer for walking in God's will and remaining faithful to Him, we shouldn't be discouraged because Peter said we are blessed. Being "blessed" means we are "highly favored by God." Even though the world may not honor our faithfulness, God won't overlook it. We know that we will receive our eternal reward in heaven for the faithfulness we demonstrate on earth.

Therefore, we must "suffer well" and not respond with evil when we are persecuted. When we defend our faith with gentleness and respect, we will put to shame those who are persecuting us (Rom. 12:20). Some Christians believe that the safest place we can be is at the center of God's will. However, the Bible teaches the exact opposite. Sometimes, the most dangerous times in our lives are when we are in the center of God's will (1 Pet.3:17; Phil. 1:29; 1 Thess. 3:13-14). For example, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were in the center of God's will, walking faithfully with Him, yet they were thrown into the furnace! Faithfulness to God won't make us immune to suffering, but we must remember that we are blessed when we suffer for Jesus, and He will be with us to strengthen us in our suffering.

- **HOW HAS THIS PASSAGE CHALLENGED YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION?**
- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO "REGARD CHRIST THE LORD AS HOLY" IN YOUR HEART? WHY IS TREASURING JESUS NECESSARY TO HELP YOU RESPOND FAITHFULLY IN SUFFERING?**

PRAY

FATHER, PLEASE HELP ME TO HONOR JESUS AS HOLY AND TO TREASURE HIM IN MY HEART SO THAT I MAY RESPOND TO MY PERSECUTORS WITH GENTLENESS AND RESPECT. EMPOWER ME TO GIVE A DEFENSE FOR MY FAITH TO MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY.

DAY FIVE

DANIEL 3:25

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had been faithful to the Lord and hadn't bowed down to the golden statue. Yet, they still faced death in the white-hot flames of a furnace. You may be thinking, "Where is God in all this?" Yet, a pagan king's description reveals that God was there the whole time! Miraculously, Nebuchadnezzar saw a fourth man in the fire and described him as "a son of the gods." So, who was this fourth man in the fire?

Nebuchadnezzar didn't serve Yahweh, but he believed many gods existed. Nebuchadnezzar believed he saw a divine being, calling him God's angel in verse 28. Throughout the Old Testament, God appeared to His people in physical form. The theological term for these appearances is *theophany* (*theo*: God, *phaino*: to appear). One of the most frequent occurrences of a theophany is when God appears through the Angel of the Lord (Gen. 16:7; 17:1). This angel, however, was described as separate from God yet also acknowledged and worshiped as God. Therefore, many scholars believe that the Angel of the Lord was Jesus, appearing to people before His incarnation, or birth. What does this mean? God is not unaware of the trials and sufferings we face; He joins us and is with us in our trials. Maybe you've struggled with feeling like your faithfulness has only led to suffering, loneliness, or pain. Just as a loving father would never leave his children when they were in danger, in Christ, God will always be with us. If He sends us, then He goes with us. We can trust Him and remain faithful to Him even if doing so leads to suffering; if we face the flames, we will never face them alone.

- **WHAT DOES DANIEL 3:25 TEACH YOU ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF GOD? DOES THIS HELP YOU BE MORE WILLING TO SUFFER FOR JESUS? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- **DOES GOD ALWAYS PROMISE TO DELIVER US FROM SUFFERING AND PERSECUTION? WHY OR WHY NOT? IF NOT, WHAT DOES GOD ALWAYS PROMISE BASED ON DANIEL 3:25?**

PRAY

FATHER, YOU SENT YOUR SON TO BE WITH AND DELIVER YOUR SERVANTS FROM THE FURNACE. HELP ME TO TRUST YOU AND REMEMBER THAT JESUS WILL ALWAYS BE WITH ME EVEN IN MY DARKEST MOMENTS OF SUFFERING.