INTO THE LIONS' DEN

unit 16 | session 3

CHRIST CONNECTION

Daniel faithfully trusted and obeyed God even at risk of his life. God rescued Daniel from death and used him to advance His kingdom. Like Daniel, Jesus faithfully trusted and obeyed God, but unlike Daniel, Jesus was not spared from death. Jesus died and was resurrected to establish the kingdom of God.

TRUSTING FOR DELIVERANCE

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 5–6

LIVING BY FAITH SETS US APART FROM THE WORLD

DANIEL 6:7-18

7 "All the administrators of the kingdom—the prefects, satraps, advisers, and governors—have
agreed that the king should establish an ordinance and enforce an edict that, for thirty days,
anyone who petitions any god or man except you, the king, will be thrown into the lions' den.
8 Therefore, Your Majesty, establish the edict and sign the document so that, as a law of the
Medes and Persians, it is irrevocable and cannot be changed." 9 So King Darius signed the
written edict. 10 When Daniel learned that the document had been signed, he went into his
house. The windows in its upstairs room opened toward Jerusalem, and three times a day
he got down on his knees, prayed, and gave thanks to his God, just as he had done before.
11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel petitioning and imploring his God. 12 So
they approached the king and asked about his edict: "Didn't you sign an edict that for thirty
days any person who petitions any god or man except you, the king, will be thrown into the
lions' den?" The king answered, "As a law of the Medes and Persians, the order stands and is
irrevocable." 13 Then they replied to the king, "Daniel, one of the Judean exiles, has ignored
you, the king, and the edict you signed, for he prays three times a day." 14 As soon as the king
heard this, he was very displeased; he set his mind on rescuing Daniel and made every effort
until sundown to deliver him. 15 Then these men went together to the king and said to him,
"You know, Your Majesty, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no edict or ordinance
the king establishes 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
continually serve, rescue you!" 17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den.
The king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that
nothing in regard to Daniel could be changed. 18 Then the king went to his palace and spent
the night fasting. No diversions were brought to him, and he could not sleep.

GOD IS OUR HOPE IN SUFFERING

DANIEL 6:19-24

19 At the first light of dawn the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he reached
the den, he cried out in anguish to Daniel. "Daniel, servant of the living God," the king said,
"has your God, whom you continually serve, been able to rescue you from the lions?" 21 Then
Daniel spoke with the king: "May the king live forever. 22 My God sent his angel and shut
the lions' mouths; and they haven't harmed me, for I was found innocent before him. And
also before you, Your Majesty, I have not done harm." 23 The king was overjoyed and gave
orders to take Daniel out of the den. When Daniel was brought up from the den, he was found
to be unharmed, for he trusted in his God. 24 The king then gave the command, and those
men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and thrown into the lions' den—they,
their children, and their wives. They had not reached the bottom of the den before the lions
overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

MAIN POINT.

Even when we suffer for our faith, God remains with us.

THEOLOGY *CONNECTION*

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT

God's omnipresence refers to His presence in all time and all places simultaneously. Because God exists apart from and outside of time and space, He is not limited by their constraints (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 17:24). He is present with us wherever we are and sees all that occurs; nothing escapes His attention (Ps. 33:14; 139:7-10; Isa. 57:15; Jer. 23:23-24; Matt. 18:20). God's omnipresence is a deterrent for sin and a source of great comfort and hope for believers.

DISCUSSION

LIVING BY FAITH SETS US APART FROM THE WORLD

DANIEL 6:7-18

- **What did Daniel do when he heard the document had been signed (v. 10)? What does it mean to have self-discipline, like Daniel?**
- **How did the way Daniel lived affect those around him? Is it possible for us to be faithful in our sinful culture?**
- **Jesus promised His followers would face opposition and suffering (John 16:33). What does it say if we *never* suffer—if our actions, words, or views never offend an ungodly culture?**

GOD IS OUR HOPE IN SUFFERING

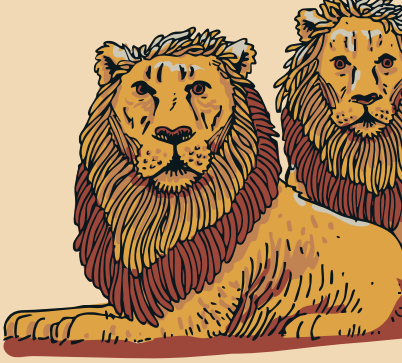
DANIEL 6:19-24

- **What are some ways Daniel could've tried to fight this battle himself instead of trusting in God?**
- **What situations cause people to doubt God is with them? What does it feel like for God to be with us?**
- **Daniel was unharmed because He trusted God (v. 23)? Why do we struggle to do so?**

ASSESS YOUR SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: HOW IS THE WAY YOU'RE LIVING NOW PREPARING YOU EITHER TO STAND OR TO FALL WHEN YOU FACE OPPOSITION?

CULTURAL *CONNECTION*

What do we do if rules or laws contradict God's Word? If you've ever been caught between the two, then you likely felt confused. Which way do we go when a school rule goes against God's Word? What can we do if our coaches or our parents—who may be unbelievers—place expectations on us that contradict the way God wants us to live? First, know you aren't alone; many believers walk a similar path. The pressure we experience from worldly authority feels overwhelming because the consequences are often immediate. The simple, yet difficult answer: God's Word is first. Always. Even when it's hard. Even if we're the only one. Scripture clearly says we should obey authority because God allowed it to be put in place (Rom. 13:1-7). But when authority asks us to do something God has forbidden or demands that we stop doing something God has commanded, we must follow the Lord (Acts 5:27-29). We shine as lights in a dark world when we obey authority, but we submit to God's authority before any other.



DAY ONE

1 PETER 2:11-12

As an exile in Babylon, Daniel remained faithful to God. His character was flawless, and Belshazzar and Darius were impressed with his wisdom and "extraordinary spirit" (5:12). In light of Daniel's holy character, the king placed him in control of his kingdom. Daniel's godly influence reached both the royal family and the ordinary people. Through Daniel's pursuit of holiness in a pagan land, God demonstrated that He is the one true God.

Like Daniel, as exiles in our world, Peter calls us to live holy lives and forsake sinful desires. Since we are God's children, we must strive to imitate our Father and be holy as He is holy. When we live "honorably among the Gentiles (unbelievers)," even when we are mistreated, unbelievers will see our good works and glorify God. What kind of reputation do you have among unbelievers in your school, sports team, or drama club? Is your character admirable enough that even if they reject your faith in Jesus, they respect you as a person due to your purity and kindness? As Christians, we should strive to put away sinful desires because we desire to please the Lord and glorify His name. Yet, we must also be motivated to put away sinful desires and walk in step with the truth of the gospel so that we can display the greatness of our God to the lost world around us. Our words and our walk may be the only "Bible" unbelievers read. May we live holy lives so that God can use us to make His name famous in a lost world.

- **WHAT SPECIFIC SINFUL DESIRES DO YOU NEED TO WALK AWAY FROM OR FIGHT AGAINST? HOW CAN YOU?**
- **IF YOUR STUDENT PASTOR ASKED SOME OF YOUR FRIENDS THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL BASED ON THE WAY YOU LIVE, WHAT WOULD THEY SAY? HOW CAN YOU LIVE A LIFE THAT ACCURATELY REPRESENTS THE GOSPEL BEFORE THEM?**

PRAY

FATHER, PLEASE FORGIVE ME FOR THE TIMES I DIDN'T WALK FAITHFULLY AROUND MY FRIENDS. PLEASE HELP ME TO WALK BY YOUR SPIRIT SO OTHERS CAN SEE YOUR GREATNESS AND PLACE THEIR FAITH IN JESUS.

DAY TWO

EXODUS 14:14

Throughout Scripture, the Israelites faced trouble and were significantly outmatched by their enemies, but God didn't tell them to "try harder;" instead, God instructed them to trust in Him because He would fight for them (Ex. 14:25; Deut. 1:30; 3:22; Josh. 10:14; 2 Chron. 20:29; Isa. 30:15). One of those stories is found in Exodus 14. God had just demonstrated His mighty power in delivering the Israelites from four hundred years of slavery to the Egyptians through ten miraculous plagues. The people were traveling through the desert on their way to the promised land when they came to the Red Sea. Not only was the sea blocking their path, but the Egyptians pursued them to take them back as slaves. The Israelites shook in terror and questioned why God would bring them out to die in the wilderness. Yet, Moses responded, telling the people not to fear or fight back but to stand firm in their faith. All they must do is "be quiet" and rest in God. He would fight for them and give them the victory.

Like Israel and Daniel, we must remain faithful to God, despite the pursuit of our enemies, and know that He will fight our battles for us. The Lord is our mighty warrior, and through Christ's death and resurrection, He has already defeated our greatest enemies: sin, Satan, and death. When we face opposition, we often want to fight back by spreading lies and gossip or by defending ourselves. But we can "stop fighting, and know that He is God" (Ps. 46:10). He is our mighty warrior; He will fight our battles for us and grant us victory in Jesus!

- **WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO "STOP FIGHTING" AND TRUST IN GOD TO FIGHT YOUR BATTLES?**
- **HOW DOES KNOWING GOD IS THE ONE WHO FIGHTS YOUR BATTLES GIVE YOU PEACE AND ENCOURAGEMENT TO STAY FAITHFUL TO HIM?**

PRAY

FATHER, I KNOW JESUS IS A MIGHTY WARRIOR, WHO DEFEATED ALL MY ENEMIES ON THE CROSS. HELP ME TO STOP FIGHTING MY BATTLES AND TO TRUST IN YOUR STRENGTH TO GIVE ME THE VICTORY.

DAY THREE

EPHESIANS 6:12

Daniel faced false accusations from the king's administrators. Even after the king announced an edict to throw him into the lions' den, Daniel didn't view them as his enemies. Instead, Satan's evil influence and the sinful desires of the people's hearts were responsible for seeking to kill and destroy Daniel. This is why, as we learned yesterday, Daniel didn't try to fight back but trusted in the Lord to deliver him from the lions if it was His will to do so.

We easily believe that people are our enemies when they slander us and persecute us for following Jesus. Yet, Paul explained that our struggle is not against people but against the powers of darkness. The list he provided refers to all the evil spiritual forces, which includes Satan, demons, and the wicked world system in which we live. To have victory over our enemies, we must recognize who our true adversaries are so that we can fight them with the appropriate weapons. Paul stated in verses 13-18 that since our enemies are the spiritual forces of evil, we must fight them with the armor of God. We must defeat Satan's lies with the truth of God's Word around our waist. We must combat wicked deeds with Christ's righteousness on our chest. We must protect ourselves from false beliefs with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. Essentially, to defeat Satan, we must "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires" (Rom. 13:14). Stop seeing people as the enemy. Instead, love and pray for them, and wage war against Satan and your sin, your true enemies, with the armor of God.

- **WHY DO WE OFTEN STRUGGLE TO SEE OUR SIN AND SATAN AS THE *REAL* ENEMIES?**
- **WHY IS IT DANGEROUS TO MISIDENTIFY THE ENEMY IN YOUR LIFE? WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING? HOW CAN YOUR CHURCH OR GROUP HELP?**

PRAY

FATHER, PLEASE HELP ME TO REMEMBER WHO MY REAL ENEMIES ARE. HELP ME TO PUT ON THE ARMOR OF GOD SO THAT I CAN FIGHT AGAINST SIN AND DARKNESS, NOT WITH MY FLESH BUT WITH YOUR TRUTH.

DAY FOUR

HEBREWS 10:32-39

Like Daniel in Babylon, the Hebrews to whom the author wrote his letter also faced persecution for following Jesus. They were tempted to revert back to Judaism from Christianity so that the persecution would stop. The author of Hebrews reminded them that Jesus is greater and salvation is found only in Him. The author reassured them of their faith and called them to persevere. He reminded them that in "a very little while, the Coming One will come and not delay." The author cited Isaiah 26:20 and Habakkuk 2:3-4 to remind the Hebrews that Jesus will return to deliver them from their enemies and judge the wicked. By quoting Habakkuk 2:3-4, the author urged the Hebrews to maintain their faith in Christ and draw near to him, even when it seemed like the enemy had prevailed and hope was lost (Hab. 3:17-19).

When we face opposition to our faith, we have two options for response: Draw near to Christ (vv. 19-25) or draw back from Him. The author contrasts those who "have faith" with those who "draw back." Those who draw back place their trust and find their hope in other things, such as friends' opinions, popularity, athletic success, college scholarships, and greater influence on social media. But the author warns that seeking rescue and salvation from these things will only lead to disappointment. Instead, based on the blood of Jesus that has made a way for us to enter God's presence, we must draw near to God in faith and hold on to our confession of hope without wavering, since He who promised is faithful (Heb. 10:22-23). Even though we can't see it, our deliverance is coming, and Jesus, our mighty warrior, will see us through.

- **WHY IS GOD'S FAITHFULNESS A MAIN THEME IN THE BIBLE?**
- **HOW CAN GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO HIS PROMISES HELP YOU PERSEVERE IN YOUR FAITH WHEN YOU EXPERIENCE TRIALS, PERSECUTION, AND SETBACKS?**

PRAY

FATHER, I PRAISE YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFULNESS TO YOUR PROMISES. PLEASE HELP ME DRAW NEAR TO YOU. KEEP ME FROM TURNING AWAY FROM YOU AND FROM PLACING MY TRUST IN OTHER THINGS. PLEASE KEEP ME FROM STUMBLING.

DAY FIVE

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-11

What do you treasure most in your life? What do you guard and protect? Daniel was willing to give his life for God because Yahweh was his treasure. For Daniel, offering his life wasn't a sacrifice; rather, he embraced the presence of God if he was killed for bowing to the Lord in prayer. Daniel's actions are truly remarkable when we consider all the power, possessions, and prestige he held as the chief officer in Babylon. But Daniel regarded it all as loss compared to knowing God. In chapter 3, Paul repeats the same idea to the Philippians. After outlining his prestigious background in Judaism (vv. 1-6), Paul said his achievements were dung compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ. Yes, you heard him correctly. Paul declared that his worldly possessions and achievements were like human waste compared to seeing and knowing his Savior.

What about you? Do you consider your relationships with your friends, athletic and academic success, phone, video games, and social media followers a loss compared to Christ? Or is Jesus second to these things? Jesus's sacrifice saved us from our sin and made us right with God; all things pale in comparison to our salvation and our imperishable inheritance through faith in Jesus. When we see Jesus as our treasure, suffering or losing worldly success and possessions is worth it. Enduring the "fellowship of his sufferings" when we are persecuted helps us to experience Christ more deeply. This strengthened relationship with Jesus then propels us to pursue the prize promised by God—eternal peace in His presence.

- **IN YOUR OWN LIFE, WHAT WOULD IT LOOK LIKE TO COUNT ALL THINGS AS LOSS COMPARED TO KNOWING JESUS?**
- **HOW DOES OUR SUFFERING HELP US IDENTIFY MORE WITH CHRIST IN HIS SUFFERING?**

PRAY

JESUS, PLEASE HELP ME TO SEE YOU AS MY LIFE'S TREASURE. FORGIVE ME FOR PLACING HIGHER VALUE ON WORLDLY SUCCESS AND POSSESSIONS. HELP ME TO FORGET WHAT'S BEHIND AND TO PURSUE YOU AS THE GREATEST TREASURE.