

Home Group Notes for Leaders
Week of January 26, 2025
Daniel 3



The story is familiar to most of us and even to those who do not read the Bible. It is a powerful and excellent example of true faith, true dedication, and true devotion to the one and only God. Help your group engage beyond the spectacular story to how we might learn and apply.

WALKING THROUGH THE FIRE

Isaiah 43:2 has been an encouragement to many people: "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they will not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, nor will the flame burn you." When was God's promise, "I will be with you" important to you?

I would guess that most of us have experienced many times when we were trusting in God's most repeated promise to be with us. None of us will ever be thrown into a fire. This question (above) is designed to help us realize that we too will be in situations where we need to stay true to God in faith, obedience, and courage.

The essence of their actions was to put on display their faith in the one true God. Are we doing that by our actions and words, our habits and concerns, and our willingness to sacrifice and suffer?

LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

Notes for Daniel 3. A few tips when studying Daniel 3. First, this slice of history happens many years after chapter two. Chapter two concluded with king Nebuchadnezzar honoring the God of Daniel. Second, it includes three of the four men from chapter one, perhaps Daniel was not present because he was serving in the court (see 2:49). Third, while the story is full of intrigue, be sure to also read this for what God is teaching us today.

Read through chapter three, and consider the following questions:

What are your first impressions? Feelings?

I am struck by their willingness to witness to their king and peers even though it may mean suffering. Right now, we have people from Trinity who are serving in Thailand people who are under threat, who are willing to give up comforts and convenience, to bring the gospel to people throughout the world. I am asking myself, are there people I am not serving or reaching because it may cost me something? Is risk keeping me from being God's ambassador?

Most of the story is about the king. What actions of the king are repeated in this story? (1, 2, 3, 5, 12, 18) Why would Daniel repeat it six times?

Six times that story tells us that it was the king who set up his image. We knew this in the first verse and then it was reinforced throughout the story. Could this point to the way that we set up idols of ourselves in our culture? We want people to like and even admire us, so we mention things that impress others. We want our houses to look perfect when people come over. Etc.

What were the king's reactions when the Chaldeans (native Babylonian astrologers) accused the "certain Jews whom you have appointed" (v.12) and then heard the Jew's response? Why such a reaction?

The king was enraged because people dared to get in his way to bring glory to himself. Anger is often a response to something in life not meeting our expectations, or people not responding favorably to ourselves or our choices. Anger is one of the most common and basic responses to people and the circumstances of life.

Have you experienced such reactions from yourself or others? What is it that causes us to experience rage or intense anger?

When my expectations are high, that sets me up for frustration or anger when things go awry. This has happened on vacations or other things that I planned. This has happened when I worked hard on a project that didn't work or turn out well.

Daniel gave a detailed record of the wrath of the king (19-22) against the Jews. What do you notice? His rage and anger affected every area of his life – physical, mental, emotional, and his ability to make healthy decisions. It even got some key men killed.

What were the king's responses when he saw the "four" people unscathed?

Shocked, amazed, alarmed. It was beyond his understanding or beliefs. It taught him that this God was greater than those he had trusted in.

DISCUSS TOGETHER

This story was first an influence on the Jews in exile and those returning to the land. What would this mean to them? What might this mean to us, God's family?

It is easy to forget that this was written first to the Jews in those times. They needed courage, hope, and camaraderie.

To us, this is an example for us to follow. These three men held deep confidence in God and His character. Therefore, they were willing to risk everything, they spoke and acted with God's wisdom and character. We cannot learn this in the moment. They could respond this way because they were following God every day and knew the character and attributes of God.

Are there things in our culture similar to the Babylonians? How are we in a similar status to the exiles?

The Babylonians were putting pressure on people to conform, to be pressed into their mold. (cf. Romans 12:1-2). They were being taught to follow the lead of their false teachings.

The same is true for us. In education, our children / students are being taught that there is no truth, no God, and no afterlife.

How are these three men a model for us today by how they responded to the king? What might we learn and apply?

First, their faith and actions were grounded in the character of God and not their own abilities.

Second, their faith included risk, sacrifice, and courage in their relationships.

Third, they were unified and teamed -up.

APPLY IT THIS WEEK

Fear of the opinions and responses of people is a constant pressure in our culture. What do you understand from this story about God and His plans? Do you have unhealthy fear of people's opinions and reactions? How can God and His family help you overcome fear of reprisal or rejection or failing?

PLEASE PRAY

- For Arin, a young man in our church family who was gravely injured in an accident
- For those who attended the women's "Courageous" conference to stay encouraged to grow
- For victims of the fires, for wisdom in how to help
- For the upcoming Man Skills gathering (February 1) to encourage men to follow Jesus

God's power and grace to you as you love and shepherd God's family.

Steve