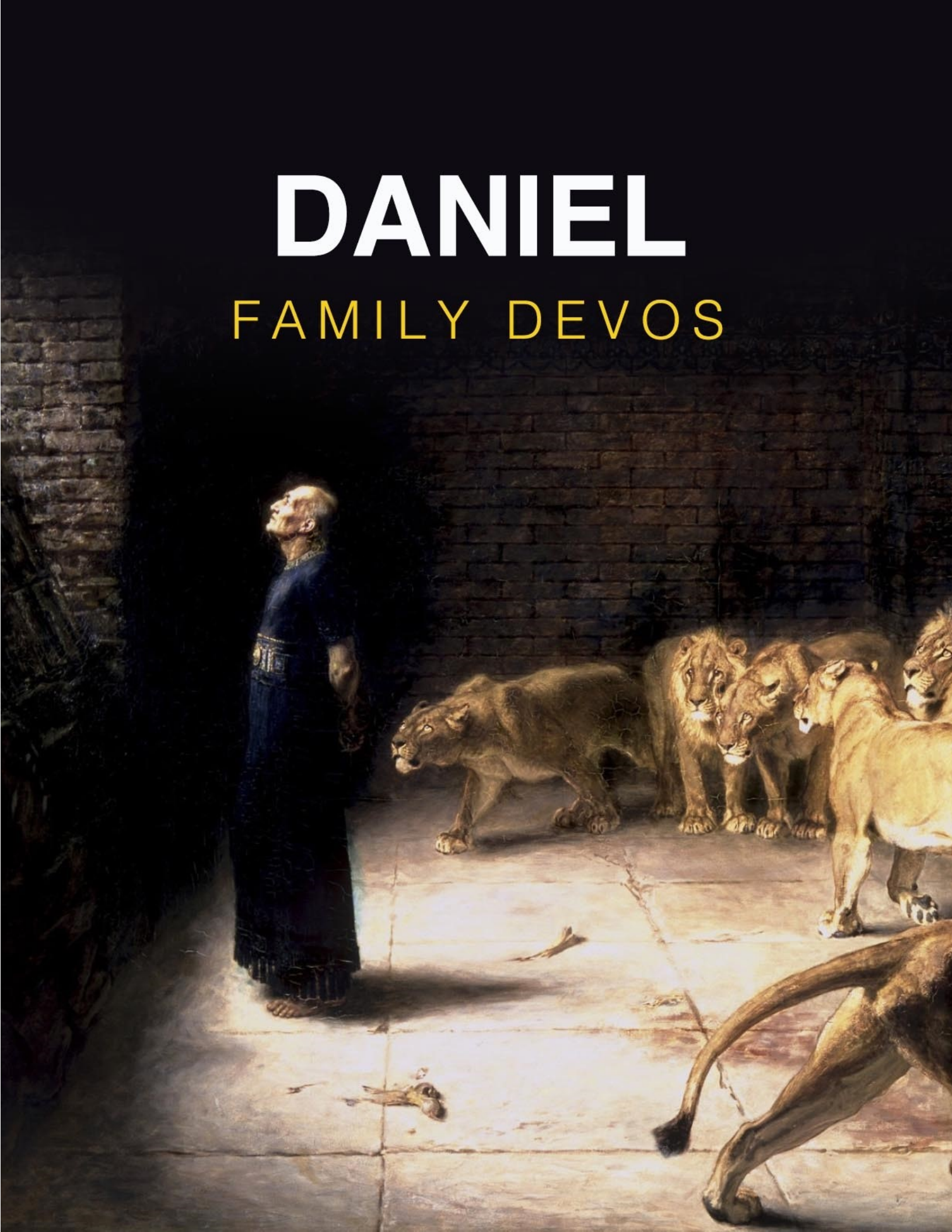


DANIEL

FAMILY DEVOS



The Exile

Scripture: Daniel 1:1-2

Memory Verse: 1 Thessalonians 5:9

“For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain Salvation through Jesus Christ.”

For My Family:

In our study of the Judges, we saw this cycle of sin, where no matter what the Lord did to reveal Himself to the people and prove that He was the One True God, the Israelites continued to turn away and worship false gods. This is a sin called idolatry, when you worship something (in this case an actual statue) instead of God. Sadly, this was a pattern that the children of Israel could not break free from. They continued to worship idols and turn away from God all through the book of Judges and right through the reign of the kings of Israel. They even began to reject the law of God by ignoring the Sabbath, among other things. We have seen God judge the Philistines in the story of Samson, the Midianites in the story of Gideon, and the Canaanites in the story of Deborah. Now we are looking at God bringing judgment to His own people.

In Deuteronomy 28, the Lord made His people a promise before they entered into the land. He told them that He was a just God, who could have no sin before Him. If the people followed His commandments and walked in His ways, He would bless them and keep them safe. But if they turned away from Him, “The LORD will exile you and your king to a nation unknown to you and your ancestors. There in exile you will worship gods of wood and stone” (Deut 28:36). Remember when we said that God cannot lie? Well, the Lord had made His people a promise, and He always keeps His promises. The people continued to reject God, and the Lord in fact did do exactly what He said and raised up a nation to overthrow His own people and take them captive to a land called Babylon.

You might think that this would cause God’s people to sulk or pout and get upset, like maybe you do when you get reprimanded for doing the wrong thing. Instead, the story of Daniel is about how the people turned back to God in captivity, especially four certain young men: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who we will look at next time.

The BIG truth that we are reminded about from the first two verses of Daniel is that God cannot let sin go unpunished, even if it is from His own chosen people. Thankfully for you and me, God has already punished our sin. When Jesus died on the cross, He took our place and our punishment, paying the penalty for our sin. God will never need to exile us. In fact, instead of sending us away from our home, Jesus’ death on the cross paves the way for us to come to our forever home, Heaven, and be with out forever King, Jesus.

Questions for Young Children:

Why did God punish His own children, the people of Israel?

How did God punish the children of Israel?

What did God do for us so that we would never be exiled like people of Israel?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

The children of Israel were punished for their sin and they turned back to God in exile. When you do something wrong and receive a punishment, how do you respond to it?

Was it right for God to punish His people in this way? Why or why not?

Purposed in His Heart

Scripture: Daniel 1

Memory Verse: Romans 12:2

“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

For My Family:

As we learned in our last study, the Babylonians had conquered Judah and taken God’s chosen people captive. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, took some of young men of Judah and brought them to study in his palace. There they would be taught the Babylonian language, culture, and religion, and would be fed Babylonian food. They were even given new Babylonian names that came from the names of the Babylonian gods. By doing this, Nebuchadnezzar hoped that they would forget all about their old country, their way of life, and most importantly, their God.

Among this group of captives, we meet Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Unlike the rest of the captives, they committed themselves to following the Lord. No matter what Nebuchadnezzar or any of the Babylonians said, they refused to do anything that went against what God wanted. In today’s story, all the young men in the king’s palace were commanded to eat the king’s meat and drink his wine. Daniel and his friends knew that this was wrong (either because it was against Jewish dietary law, used in idol worship, or both), and so verse 8 says, “Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank.” They told the king’s servant not to give them the king’s meat or wine.

Now this was a big deal. Everyone else was eating the king’s food. If Daniel and his friends became weaker than the other young men and the king found out what the servant did, they all could be in big trouble. So Daniel asked the servant to bring them vegetables and water for ten days, and at the end, they would see whether or not they were as healthy as the other young men who were eating the meat. At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his friends were actually bigger and stronger than the rest of the men. When the king saw them, he was very impressed.

Like Daniel and his friends, our world surrounds us with ungodly influences. In TV shows, movies, and sometimes even our school, we are told that God isn’t real, we don’t have to obey Him, and we should be able to do whatever we want. You may have friends or family members who don’t believe in Jesus. It may be tempting to try to be just like everybody else, but as Christians, we’re called to be different from the world. We need to imitate Daniel’s example and determine in our hearts to obey the Lord, no matter what the world around us says. Instead of being like everyone else, let’s have Jesus transform us to be more like Him.

Questions for Young Children:

What did the king command all the young men to do?

How did Daniel and his friends respond when they were told to eat and drink the king's food?

After ten days, who was bigger and stronger, Daniel and his friends who obeyed the Lord, or the people who ate the king's meat?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What are some reasons Daniel might have been tempted to eat the king's food? How do you think he overcame these temptations?

In today's story, Daniel had both good influences (Daniel's friends) and bad ones (Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonian culture, the other young men)? What are some good and bad influences in your life?

Daniel purposed in his heart not to defile himself with the king's meat or wine. Is there something you need to purpose in your heart not to do, even if everyone else around you is doing it?

The God Who Reveals Secrets

Scripture: Daniel 2:1-30

Memory Verse: James 1:17

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”

For My Family:

Nebuchadnezzar was one of the scariest kings who's ever lived. In today's story, he had a bad dream, and that was bad news for everyone. The king called his wise men to help him understand what the dream meant. Now these “wise men” weren't actually smart guys. They were magicians who worshipped false gods. They asked the king to tell them what he dreamed, but he refused. He knew that the wise men would just try to make something up if he told them the dream, and so he said that if they couldn't tell him both what he dreamed and what his dream meant, then all the wise men, their families, and their homes would be destroyed, but whoever could interpret the dream would receive a great reward.

Although they worshipped the true God, Daniel and his three friends were also considered to be wise men, and Arioch, the king's captain, went to warn them of what was happening. When they heard the news, Daniel and his friends spent the night in prayer, asking God to show them the king's dream so that they could be saved. Then God revealed the dream to Daniel in a vision, and Daniel praised the Lord for showing it to him.

The next day, Arioch brought Daniel before the king, and Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel if he was able to tell and interpret the dream. At this moment, Daniel could have taken all the credit. He could have said, “Yes, I figured it out because I am so much wiser than all the other wise men.” But instead, Daniel gave all the glory to God, saying that the dream and interpretation came from Him. We will look at what Nebuchadnezzar's dream was and what it meant next time.

What made Daniel and his friends different from all the other wise men wasn't that they were smarter than the rest. They were different because they knew the Lord. Daniel realized that he had been given his vision as a gift from the Lord, and he responded in two key ways. First, he worshipped the Lord, realizing that every good gift comes from Him. Second, he gave glory to the Lord, testifying to Nebuchadnezzar that the dream and its interpretation came from God. We have been given an even greater gift from God than Daniel's: the gift of salvation. We have been saved from our sins and have become sons and daughters of the Living God. Like Daniel, we should respond by praising the Lord and telling our unsaved friends and family about our great God.

Questions for Young Children:

Why was King Nebuchadnezzar so upset?

What did Daniel and his friends do when they heard about the king's orders?

What did Daniel do after God showed him the dream?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Read James 1:17 (our memory verse at the top of the previous page). Based on that verse, where did Daniel's wisdom and ability to know and interpret the king's dream come from? Where do our gifts or talents come from?

What are some gifts or talents that God has given you? Why is it important to recognize that these gifts come from God?

Are you ever tempted to take credit for the ways that God has gifted you? How can you give God the glory instead?

Prophecy

Scripture: Daniel 2:31-49

Memory Verse: Isaiah 46:9b-10

“I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.’”

For My Family:

Last time, we saw that the Lord had revealed the king’s dream to Daniel, and not just the dream, but the interpretation as well. Through this dream, the Lord revealed something to Daniel, the king, and anyone else willing to listen, about events that were still to come in the future. When the Lord shows people something that He promises will happen in the future, we use a special word: prophecy. The word sounds like another word we used when talking about Deborah. If you remember, she was a prophet, someone who hears from God and delivers that message to the people. Prophecy is the message that is revealed from God and then shared with all of us, either through people like Deborah and Daniel, or through His Word.

The interpretation of the dream was a prophecy about the kingdoms that would come after Babylon, which were the Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. Ultimately, the dream speaks to us about God’s kingdom, led by Jesus Christ, that will stand forever. It’s a kingdom greater than anything that has ever come before.

The Bible is full of prophecy. There is prophecy about children being born to Abraham and Zechariah, prophecy about God’s judgment coming against Israel’s enemies, and even Israel itself. There is prophecy about where specific people would go, or where armies would fight, like those revealed to Elisha. There are also many, many prophecies about Jesus and His birth, death, resurrection, and eventual reign on earth. Lots of the prophecies that we read about in Scripture have already been fulfilled, but there are lots that we are still waiting to see happen. Even in the dream that the Lord gave Nebuchadnezzar, we see some things that happened already (proving the prophecy to be real) like the Persians, Greeks, and Romans having great empires that eventually fell, but also things that haven’t happened yet, like Jesus setting up His own Kingdom that will last forever.

When the dream was revealed to the king, it caused him to glorify God, just as Daniel had hoped. When we read through the prophetic passages of Scripture, it should cause us to do the same, to praise God and worship Him for all the things that He has done, is doing, and will do in our lives. Praise God that one day, He will return and make all things new, and His throne will stand forever!

Questions for Young Children:

What is prophecy?

When Nebuchadnezzar heard the prophecy, what did he do?

Which part of Daniel's prophecy still applies to us today?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

In what ways did Daniel's prophecy come true? (For more info, go to www.enduringword.com/bible-commentary/daniel-2)

In what ways are we still waiting for Daniel's prophecy to come to pass?

What was the purpose of God revealing this dream to Daniel? (Hint: What did it cause Nebuchadnezzar to do?)

The Golden Statue

Scripture: Daniel 3:1-18

Memory Verse: Luke 4:8

“And Jesus answered Him, ‘It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.’””

For My Family:

The king’s decree had gone forth: when the music played, everyone must fall down and worship the golden statue that Nebuchadnezzar had made. What would you do? If you worship the statue, you are breaking God’s law. If you refuse to worship it, then you will be thrown into the furnace and be killed. This was not an easy decision, and yet for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the choice was clear.

These three faithful men spoke to the king and told him, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace... but if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego fully believed that God had the power to deliver them from the furnace, that He was bigger and stronger than any of the Babylonian gods and certainly than King Nebuchadnezzar. They weren’t sure that God *would* save them out of the furnace, only that He *could*, but that didn’t matter to these three. They wanted to make it clear to everyone, even the king, that they worshipped the Lord God alone, and if they had to endure the fire because of it, they would.

As we have read in our previous studies, Daniel and his three friends were very respectful of the king and those in authority in Babylon. They served the king well and were considered honored advisors to Him. When the king asked them to do something, they would do it, that is until they were asked to do something that directly contradicted (or went against) the Lord and His Word. When they were told to break God’s Law, then they simply could not do it. Next time, we will look at the consequences of their choice.

The Bible instructs us to honor and respect those that God has placed in authority over us. We should show respect to and be willing to obey our government, judges, police officers, and especially our teachers and parents. But like the three heroes in this story, we have a higher obligation. The Scriptures call us to obey God first and foremost. If someone asks us to break God’s law, even if that someone is very important to us, then we need to stand for the Lord and honor Him first, even if that means facing some consequences.

Standing for God can be difficult, it might even mean going through a time of suffering or difficulty because of it, but like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, we can know that it is always worthwhile, and it is always the right decision.

Questions for Young Children:

What did the king tell everyone to worship? Does this remind you of any other stories in the Bible?

What choice did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego make?

If someone asks us to do something that God wouldn't like, should we do it?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Who are some authorities that God has put in your life?

What if those authorities are corrupt? Should we respect and honor them then? Did Daniel and his friends honor their authorities?

Abednego, Shadrach and Meshach were willing to suffer real consequences in order to follow their God. What consequences might you face if you refused to obey your friends? Principal? Parents? Government? (*It is important to note once again, we should only do this if we are being asked to do something that breaks God's Law or goes against His Word to us.)

With Us in the Trial

Scripture: Daniel 3:19-30

Memory Verse: Psalm 23:4

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;
For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

For My Family:

As we saw in our last study, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to worship Nebuchadnezzar’s golden statue. They told the king, “We do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up,” in defiance of his direct command to bow down before it. In verse 19, we see the consequences of this decision.

True to his promise, Nebuchadnezzar, “full of fury,” had the furnace heated 7 times hotter than normal and had the three Israelites thrown inside. The fire was so hot that the soldiers who threw them in were burned and killed, but Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remained unharmed. Not only were they not burned, but the king and those with him saw that someone else had joined them in the fire, someone who was like “the Son of God.”

The Israelites in this passage did not know what God was going to do. Maybe they wondered if God would bring water up out of the ground and put out the fire before they could be thrown in, or maybe a great wind would come and blow the fire out, protecting them from the flames. God could have done any number of things to stop them from going through the trial, but instead He allowed them to be thrown into the furnace. The Lord did not prevent them from going through what must have been the scariest moment of their lives. Instead, He joined them in it. The Lord not only kept the boys from harm, but He stood with them in the midst of it.

Jesus promised us that during our lives, we will all go through difficult and troubling circumstances (John 16:33), but He also promised us that no matter what we go through, He will be with us. When we go through difficult times, we can remember the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They didn’t know if God would save them, but they knew that He could, and when the Lord didn’t prevent them from experiencing the trial, He met them wonderfully in the midst of it.

Jesus allowed the trial of the fiery furnace to happen because ultimately it would bring Him more glory and draw people to believe in Him. Verses 26-30 show Nebuchadnezzar praising God and commanding that no one speak badly about the Lord. He even said that there was not other god like our God, “who can deliver like this.” When we are going through difficult times, remember that God can use those for His glory and even use our trials to increase our faith and draw others to know Him.

Questions for Young Children:

Did God put out the fire so that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego wouldn't have to go through it? What did He do instead?

The king made the fire hotter than it normally was. Do you remember how much hotter?

What did Nebuchadnezzar do after Jesus saved Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

Why didn't God simply put the fire out? Why did the three men have to go through the trial?

Has God ever taken a difficult time in your life and made something good out of it? What was it, and what did God do? (Parents, this is a good opportunity for you to share your own experiences.)

A Humbled King

Scripture: Daniel 4

Memory Verse: Luke 14:11

“For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

For My Family:

Have you ever had to learn something the hard way? Maybe you were warned something was hot, but you touched it anyway and got burned, or maybe you got sick after you were told not to eat too much candy. Today we read that King Nebuchadnezzar learned an important lesson about the Most High God. It's a story about a stubborn and proud king who was a living example of our memory verse. When he exalted himself, he was humbled, but when he humbled himself, he was exalted.

Daniel 4 is thought to have taken place 20-30 years after Daniel 3. It's a letter written by the King Nebuchadnezzar himself about how the Most High God humbled him in his pride by causing him to live like an ox for seven years! Talk about learning something the hard way... Nebuchadnezzar was given a chance to do what was right and turn to God, but instead he filled his heart with pride. What is pride? Pride is that thing in our hearts that makes us feel like we are better than someone else. As King Nebuchadnezzar looked at his great kingdom, immeasurable wealth, the magnificent buildings and gardens in his city he said, “Look at what *I* have done in *my* power and majesty. *I* am amazing!”

God's voice silenced him from heaven and the king's dream came to pass. He ate grass and lived in the field for seven years! And you thought being grounded or put in time-out was bad... But by the end of this time, Nebuchadnezzar had learned his lesson: that “the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever he chooses” (4:32). He was a humbled man who learned that there was a King much greater than he was who had given him his kingdom and power, and who could take it away at any moment.

And that's what humility is: to be brought low. It's the opposite of pride. To realize and admit your need for God and for others. It's as Jesus said, “*Without Me you can do nothing.*” We depend upon God for everything from the breath in our lungs to the beating of our hearts! Understanding this helps us brag about ourselves less and worship and praise God more, which is God's desire. He's not seeking to embarrass or humiliate us, He wants us to understand that He chooses to bless us with certain abilities to serve others and point people to Him, not ourselves. He wants us to worship and honor Him and invite others to do the same. So take the words of the king to heart, “Praise and extol and honor the King of heaven,” and know that “those who walk in pride He is able to put down (to humble).”

Questions for Young Children:

What is pride? What is humility?

What happened to King Nebuchadnezzar because of his pride?

What did the king do after he returned to normal?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

What is a time or situation in which you have been tempted to be proud?
(Parents, share from your own experiences as well.)

How does pride hurt others?

What lesson was God trying to get across to King Nebuchadnezzar and how does that apply to us? (See Daniel 4:17)

Pray:

King Nebuchadnezzar. What an unlikely convert! Or is he? Even after witnessing miracles and wonders from God, he didn't turn to God until many years later. Is there anyone in your family that you sometimes just think will never turn to the Lord? Take time to pray for your unsaved family, friends, and neighbors together as a family, and be encouraged that God can draw even those who seem farthest away to Himself.

The Writing on the Wall

Scripture: Daniel 5

Memory Verse: Proverbs 16:18

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

For My Family:

About 25 years had gone by since the end of Daniel 4. King Nebuchadnezzar had passed off the scene and his grandson, Belshazzar, sat on the throne. As we learned last time, God humbled the proud King Nebuchadnezzar, who then worshiped God and warned others against the foolishness of pride. Belshazzar knew all of this but didn't take it seriously (4:22), like many who hear God's Word today. They hear of God's signs and wonders, hear people tell them about how God changed their lives, and hear people talk about their need for salvation. They hear, but they refuse to listen. We shouldn't be discouraged at this. As we saw with Nebuchadnezzar, even the most stubborn person can change, but the sad reality is that some choose not to.

This was the foolishness of Belshazzar. He mocked the God of Israel by treating the holy things taken from the temple as if they were common, and boasted in the greatness of the gods of Babylon. Though his city was besieged by enemies, Belshazzar had everything he needed to be safe (or so he thought): plenty of food and water, and thick walls, and strong gates. What could go wrong? Well, those walls and gates couldn't keep God out. Fingers appeared out of nowhere at his party and wrote a message for him on the wall. Terrified, he offered a great reward for anyone who could tell him what these words meant. When no one could, Daniel was called for. *“You have not humbled your heart... and have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven,”* said Daniel. The words written by the fingers were words of judgment to the ungodly king, and that very night he was killed and the kingdom conquered.

Sometimes people live as if things will continue as they always have. They have been told about God's greatness and goodness, but continue on as if their lives are better off without Him. Little do they know every breath is a gift from God! If Belshazzar teaches us anything, it's that God will not be patient forever. Today is the day of salvation! We aren't promised tomorrow. Jesus is coming back! This is good news for those who accept Him, for they will live with Him for all of eternity in the new kingdom, but for those who reject Him: *“pride comes before destruction.”* This is a sad and hard truth, but there is more for us to do than to just be sad. We must pray and proclaim. We must share and show the whole world the good news of Jesus! That God is not willing that any should perish, but sent His Son to take the punishment for our sin so that we could receive the gift of eternal life.

Questions for Young Children:

What appeared during Belshazzar's party and what did it do?

Belshazzar thought he had everything he needed for protection and safety, but what was he missing?

Who can you pray for that doesn't know Jesus? Who is someone you could tell about Jesus? (Encourage your kids in this. Make this question a part of your family routine. Be creative. Have them draw pictures, write cards, or bake something for neighbors, family, etc.)

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

How is forgetting or ignoring what God has told us in His Word harmful?

Why does God care about how we live our lives?

Who can you pray for that doesn't know Jesus? Who is someone you could tell about Jesus today? (Again, they can get creative in this. Who can they text, what could they post to social media, etc.)

Daniel and the Lions' Den

Scripture: Daniel 6

Memory Verse: Matthew 4:16

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

For My Family:

Throughout their whole lives, Daniel and his friends demonstrated faithfulness and integrity. As young men, they wouldn't eat the king's meats because it went against God's law. When they were older, the friends refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's golden statue, even though that meant being thrown into the fiery furnace. They all were faithful in their service to the kings, but when they were asked to do something that went against God's commands, they trusted the Lord, regardless of the consequences. Now in his old age, Daniel continued to live in faithfulness and integrity, and the new king noticed.

King Darius was impressed with Daniel's character, and so he made Daniel a governor, one of the three most powerful men in the kingdom under the king. In fact, Daniel did his job so well that the king wanted to put him in charge of the entire kingdom, even the other two governors. This made the other governors jealous. They wanted to get rid of Daniel, so they tricked the king into making a new law that said that no one in the kingdom could pray to anyone except the king for thirty days. Anyone who broke this law would be thrown into the lions' den. The governors knew that Daniel would not obey this law, and they caught him praying and brought him to the king.

When the king realized that he had been tricked, he was very upset, but there was nothing he could do. Daniel had to be thrown to the lions. Darius could only pray that Daniel's God would protect him. That night, the king couldn't sleep, and as soon as it was morning, he ran to the den to see if Daniel was still alive—and he was! God sent His angels to shut the mouths of the lions. When Darius heard this, he removed Daniel from the lions' den and made a new law that everyone in this kingdom must worship Daniel's God.

Clearly the way Daniel lived his life caught Darius' attention. He noticed Daniel's integrity, so he made him governor. He observed how Daniel trusted in the Lord and saw God deliver him from the lions' den, and that let him to praise the Lord and decree that the whole kingdom should only worship Daniel's God. Like Daniel, Jesus wants us to live in a way that points people to Him. Non-believers should see our integrity (doing the right thing in every situation) and faith in God through difficulties. When they notice that we live differently from them and ask us why, it's a great chance to talk to them about Jesus and share the Gospel. Let's live in faith and integrity so we can bring glory to our God.

Questions for Young Children:

Why were the other governors jealous of Daniel? What did they do?

How did Daniel respond when he heard the new law? What happened to him?

How did God rescue Daniel? What did the king do when he learned Daniel was saved?

Questions for Teens and Pre-teens:

As Christians, what makes us and the way we live our lives different from the people around us?

What is integrity? What are some areas of life where it might be challenging for you to show integrity?

Has anyone ever asked you why you live differently from others? How did you respond? (Parents, feel free to share your own story if you have one.) If not, how do you think you should respond?