

Daniel Discussion Questions 3.5.17

Leader Prep Section

Take time before your small group meeting to prepare by reading through the questions and scripture passage so that you can select 4-5 questions that are best suited to your group.

Try to work through at least one question from each of the sections - Hook, Book, Look, Took in order to move from observation to application.

When possible spend time in prayer for each member of your group.

Questions

Hook - Ice breaker type questions to help make the transition into the study time.

1. What experience do you have with standing against a popular decision for moral reasons?
2. Share a story about a time when you were the only one in a group who did not do something because it seemed wrong to you.

Background

At the close of chapter 2 Daniel stayed in the royal court while his friends were made administrators over the province of Babylon. We pick up the story this week in chapter 3 and we are not given any clear indicators about how much time has past. But we do know that despite his experience with the One True God in chapter 2 Nebuchanezzar commissioned a 90 foot gold statue to be built. He then gathered all the leaders of the country and from the people he has defeated to the place he has set the statue. This group would have included Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. The command was given that, when the music started playing they must all fall down and worship. For the Hebrews in the crowd this was not an option for it would have violated two of the commandments -

“You shall have no other god before me, and You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, Exodus 20:3-5a.

For those who chose not to immediately fall down and worship the idol there would be no mercy, they would be immediately thrown into a fiery furnace.

A group of astrologers, the very group that Daniel made look bad when he was able to tell the King what his dream was and interpret it for him, were the ones who went to King Nebuchadnezzar to tattle on Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, When they were brought before the king he gave them an opportunity to change their minds and bow down and worship the idol. They once again refused and told him their God was powerful enough to save them, but did not guarantee that he would.

Read Daniel 3:1-30

Book - These questions are designed to get you into the text itself.

1. Who has gathered at the plain of Dura around the 90 foot tall and 27 foot wide gold statue? What are they to do when the music plays? What will happen if they disobey?
2. How does King Nebuchadnezzar respond when he hears some Jews did not fall down and worship his golden statue? What is Shadrach's, Meshach's and Abednego's response?

3. How hot does King Nebuchadnezzar have the furnace set to before throwing Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into it? What happens to the guards who have to put them in the furnace?
4. When King Nebuchadnezzar sees the fire is not burning them up and there is a fourth person in there with them, what happens?

Look - These questions will take you on a deeper look at what the passage means for us today.

1. What would be the equivalent of being called together to worship a 90 foot statue in our world today?
2. When the risks of punishment are high what does it take to stand firm in your faith?
3. Why do some people react so strongly to others standing for what they believe in? How can we use those moments for good?
4. When we see God do amazing things what is our response? How do we move beyond just the emotions of the moment to real life altering change?

Took - These questions are focused on applying the big idea from the text to our lives.

1. When a crowd agrees on what the course of action should be, but you disagree; what can you do to stand for truth?
2. How can Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego serve as role models of how to remain faithful in the face of great personal risk?
3. What does it look like to use Shadrach's, Meshach's and Abednego's example of trusting in God's power without a guarantee of safety as a blueprint for living boldly today?
4. At the end of chapters 2 and 3 we have seen King Nebuchadnezzar have profound reactions to what he has witnessed God doing, but he does not seem to change. How do we have the faith of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego? A faith that allows the three of them to say in verse 18, "But even if he does not, we want you to know, Your Majesty, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image you have set up."

Closing

One thing we know for sure is that we will all have moments where we face opportunities like the one Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego faced. It may not be in front of a King and a 90 foot golden statue, but we will all have a chance to live in a way that is counter cultural and goes against the flow. In those moments we need to find ways to have the faith of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. A faith that recognizes that our God is powerful enough to save us, but even if he doesn't we know we have made the right choice. Spend some time praying for one another that you would have the words and the faith to follow their model.

Reminder: Our allegiance is first to the Kingdom of Heaven, but held in tension with the fact that we are called to love this world and those who live in it. Total disconnection is not the answer, we must find a way to be in the world, not of the world.