



THE PROPHETS

Date: 10.6.24 | Title: Life in Exile for the Faithful | Scripture: Daniel 1, 3 & 6

LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING

Middle School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

High School Students

The Bible is God's message about Himself and His salvation plan through Jesus.

God deserves respect, obedience, and honor.

God wants us to live for His glory.

God is a righteous judge.

God sent Jesus to be the atonement for our sins.

Jesus fulfills Old Testament prophecies and promises.

Jesus gave His life for us on the cross and He is the only way for salvation.



MEMORY VERSE

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." Lamentations 3:22-24

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

The predictions made by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets had come to pass. God had sent many prophets to His people, but their hearts would not turn back to Him. God handed His people over to their enemies as punishment for their persistent idolatry and hardheartedness toward the covenant (Lev. 26:33, 39; Deut. 28:64). The Babylonians burned Jerusalem and the temple to the ground, forcing most of the survivors into exile in Babylon.

With the loss of God's presence and the loss of the Promised Land, the book of Daniel begins a new chapter that focuses on life in exile and the gradual return to the land. Daniel, a young prophet God raised up in Babylon, is the author of the book. Daniel's name means "God is my judge". Daniel was taken into captivity by the Babylonians during the first Jewish deportation and he and his friends were placed in the service of King Nebuchadnezzar's court, and he eventually rose to a key administrative role. (Daniel 12:4; Matthew 24:15). Daniel would interpret many dreams and see many visions during his years in Babylon. The events recorded in Daniel's book occurred during the same period as the lives of the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah. As a captive in Babylon, Daniel lived and ministered for nearly seventy years, advising several kings throughout his time in exile. His story illustrates how Israelites can remain faithful to God even during exile as Daniel remained faithful to God in spite of the pressures put on him to compromise.

At the beginning of the book of Daniel, the Babylonians are in power, but during Daniel's life and ministry, the Persians rise to prominence. Although Daniel is considered a prophet and delivered many prophecies, his role and message were distinct from those of other prophets. The first six chapters of Daniel recount the experiences of Daniel and his three friends, both in Babylon and later in Persia. Their steadfast faithfulness to God amidst severe persecution—such as being cast into a fiery furnace and a den of lions—serve as a powerful example for the Israelites on trusting God during the exile. Despite the national apostasy and judgment, individuals like Daniel still served God faithfully. The major theme of Daniel 1-6 underscores that, even though the king of Babylon has destroyed Jerusalem, he was ultimately powerless before the God of Daniel.

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

In Chapter One, Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, were chosen for opportunities to serve the king. Nebuchadnezzar's program included selecting the cream of Judah's crop, its finest youth from its best families, and indoctrinating them in Babylonian language and culture (Daniel 1:3-5). They were immediately given Babylonian names to rob them of their Jewish identity and conform them to the king's standards. Daniel was called Belteshazzar and his friends were renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. The young Hebrews were required to eat the king's food (1:5). Daniel, however, resolved not to partake of the king's food and wine, which he considered defiling (1:8) and led his friends to do the same. We are not told why the king's food and wine were defiling. Perhaps they were unclean or offered to Babylonian idols, or perhaps the Hebrews wanted to distinguish themselves from Babylonian culture. In any case, Daniel boldly asked if he and his three friends could restrict themselves to vegetables and water (1:12) and God so worked that the request was granted (1:9). Indeed, God gave these young men wisdom and intellectual skill as well so that they distinguished themselves before Nebuchadnezzar (1:17-20). We see here the twin themes of God's sovereignty and the commitment of the four young Hebrews to live in a way that pleased God. Daniel could have enjoyed his new status as one of the king's chosen few. Instead, he anchored himself firmly to God. We see Daniel's resistance evident in the phrase "purposed in his heart." Daniel was focused on God, and he decided that he would follow Him in Babylon just as he had back home. He stayed true to God and resisted temptation, and God gave him favor with the people in charge, enabling him to show his intelligence and skill while living on a humble, kosher diet.

By the beginning of Chapter Three, sixteen years had passed, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had become exemplars of faithfulness for all Israel. If Israel was to be restored from exile, it needed to serve Yahweh and resist idolatry. During this period, Nebuchadnezzar, who had grown in power and pride, constructed a colossal golden statue—likely a representation of himself—and commanded everyone to worship it. This statue, ninety feet tall, was set up on the plain of Dura, and Nebuchadnezzar decreed that all must bow down to it. Those who refused were threatened with death.

Nebuchadnezzar may have assumed that his Jewish advisors had abandoned their faith and forgotten God's laws. However, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego remained unwavering in their commitment to the first two commandments: worshiping no other gods and avoiding man-made images. They refused to bow to the king's statue, which led to them being reported to Nebuchadnezzar by envious courtiers. As a result, the three men were cast into a furnace so heated that it killed the soldiers who threw them in. Remarkably, Nebuchadnezzar later saw a fourth figure in the flames (Daniel 3:25), which some scholars suggest might have been a Christophany—a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Regardless, it was evident that God was faithful to them in their trial, honoring their commitment.

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

In response to their deliverance, Nebuchadnezzar praised God and decreed that no one should speak against the God of Daniel (vv. 28-29). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego's refusal to worship false gods and their miraculous rescue by the Lord underscore a key message: Israel would ultimately be delivered by God if it remained faithful. The narrative illustrates that despite the exile due to sin, Israel would be restored and experience Yahweh's promises if it served the Lord as these three men did.

In Chapter Six, Daniel faced persecution from Babylonian officials, much like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did in Chapter Three. Despite being eighty-seven years old, Daniel was appointed as one of three governors overseeing 120 men. Instead of retiring, Daniel distinguished himself through his excellent spirit and administrative skills, leading Darius to consider placing him over the entire region. Daniel's excellence fueled jealousy among his peers. Unable to find any fault in him, they decided to exploit his devotion to God. They persuaded Darius to issue a decree stating that anyone who prayed to any god or man other than the king during the next thirty days would be thrown into the lions' den. Knowing that Daniel would never obey such a decree, they ensured his downfall.

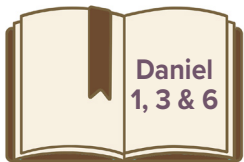
As expected, Daniel continued his practice of praying three times a day, openly visible through his window. His adversaries caught him in the act and reported him to Darius. The king, deeply distressed by the situation, attempted to find a way around the decree but ultimately had to uphold it. He told Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you" (v. 16).

After a sleepless night, Darius rushed to the lion's den, which had been sealed with his own signet ring. He called out to Daniel, who replied, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you" (vv. 21-22). The lions had not harmed Daniel, and the conspirators and their families were thrown into the den, where they were immediately devoured.

Darius, like Nebuchadnezzar before him, issued a decree praising God for His power and faithfulness to Daniel (vv. 25-28). Daniel's unwavering trust in God, even in the face of death, exemplified his complete faith in God's sovereignty. His story reflects how true devotion to God can lead to divine deliverance, inspiring even the most powerful rulers to acknowledge and praise the God of Israel.

Despite their captivity, Daniel and his friends remained devoted to serving God. Their faithfulness was rewarded with favor, health, wisdom, and high positions. They chose to obey God rather than men, showing respect for human authorities while entrusting their ultimate fate to God. Through their trials, God honored their faithfulness, demonstrating His power and sovereignty.

LOCATE THE SCRIPTURE & TELL THE STORY



Tell the story: Use the Background Info for Leaders to help tell today's story.

Summary of Daniel Chapter One:

When Jehoiakim was the king of Judah, Babylon's king, Nebuchadnezzar, went with his army to Judah. Because God's people had sinned against Him, God allowed King Nebuchadnezzar to take over the city of Jerusalem.

TELL
THE
STORY



King Nebuchadnezzar's leaders gathered a group of young men from among God's people and brought them to Babylon. The king wanted people who were healthy, handsome, and good learners to serve in his palace. Every day, King Nebuchadnezzar gave the young men special meals. They ate the same food and drank the same drinks that the king ate and drank. They would be trained from three years. Then, they would be ready to serve the king.

Read directly from Scripture, use the message, or the summary provided in the lesson

Four of the young men from Judah were different from the others in the group. They worshipped the Lord, the one true God. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. The man in charge of the group gave them new Babylonian names. Daniel's new name was Shadrach. Mishael's new name was Meshach, and Azariah's new name was Abednego.

Even though Daniel and his friends weren't in Judah anymore, Daniel wanted to be faithful to God. God's laws told Daniel what he could and could not eat. Daniel was not allowed to eat some of the food that the king gave to young men. Daniel asked the man in charge for permission to eat other foods.

Re-Tell
The Bible
Story

Daniel said, "Try this for 10 days. Let us eat only vegetables and drink only water. Then see if we are healthier than the other young men."

Put the events in order, draw a comic strip, build it with blocks or playdough, act it out, etc...

The guard agreed. At the end of the 10 days, Daniel and his friends looked healthier than the young men who had eaten the king's food. After that, the guard allowed Daniel and his friends to keep drinking water and eating vegetables.



THE PROPHETS

God was happy that Daniel obeyed Him. God blessed Daniel and his friends. He made them wise and smart. They learned lots of new things. God gave Daniel the ability to understand visions and dreams.

When their training was over, Daniel and his friends stood before the king. The king saw that they were smarter and stronger than all the other young men. They were even smarter than the wise men who worked for the king. Daniel served the king for many years.

Summary of Daniel Chapter Three:

In this chapter, Nebuchadnezzar sets up a massive golden image and commands that everyone in his kingdom bow down and worship it whenever they hear music. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refuse to worship the image, staying true to their faith in God.

Furious, Nebuchadnezzar has them thrown into a fiery furnace. The furnace is so hot that it kills the soldiers who throw them in. However, the three men are miraculously unharmed and walk around in the fire with a fourth figure who resembles a divine being.

Seeing this miracle, Nebuchadnezzar is amazed and praises their God. He then decrees that no one should speak against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and promotes them to higher positions in the province of Babylon. The chapter highlights themes of faith, divine deliverance, and the power of God to protect and save.

Summary of Daniel Chapter Six:

In this chapter, King Darius the Mede has set up a new administrative structure, and Daniel, known for his exceptional qualities and faithfulness, is distinguished among the officials. This angers some of the other officials, who look for a way to discredit him but find no fault in his conduct.



THE PROPHETS

They devise a plan by convincing King Darius to issue a decree that anyone who prays to any god or human other than the king himself for thirty days should be thrown into the lion's den. Despite knowing the decree, Daniel continues to pray to God three times a day, as was his custom.

The conspirators catch Daniel in the act and report him to the king. Although Darius is distressed and tries to find a way to save Daniel, he is bound by the law and has to cast Daniel into the lion's den. However, Daniel is unharmed because God sends an angel to shut the lions' mouths.


The next morning, Darius finds Daniel alive and is overjoyed. He then orders Daniel's accusers and their families to be thrown into the lion's den, where they are immediately killed. Darius praises Daniel's God and issues a decree that everyone in his kingdom should revere the God of Daniel.

Re-tell the Bible Story: Have students re-tell the story as best they can.

Attributes of God: Determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true, change the way we live in Christ?

Share the GOSPEL:

Daniel was faithful to God, and God blessed him. In an even greater way, Jesus was always faithful to God. He came to earth and followed God's plan to save sinners. Those who trust in Jesus receive God's forgiveness and blessing.



THE PROPHETS

“Storying” Questions: As you ask these questions, have your students find the answers in the actual verses of scripture instead of recalling them from your re-telling of the story. We always want to encourage all of our students to go directly to God’s Word over a commentary on or summary of scripture. Use the Bible Study Bookmark Questions as well as these questions to help students understand the text:

- 1. What is the context of the book of Daniel? Provide some background for these stories.**
- 2. How did Daniel and his friends honor the Lord in exile in Chapter One?**
- 3. How did Daniel and his friends honor the Lord in exile in Chapter Three?**
- 4. How did Daniel and his friends honor the Lord in exile in Chapter Six?**
- 5. What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?**
- 6. What does this story teach me about myself?**
- 7. Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?**
- 8. Are there promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?**
- 9. How does this story help me live on mission better**

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

ATTENTIVE - God hears and responds to the needs of his children.

COMPASSIONATE - God cares for his children and acts on their behalf.

CREATOR - God made everything. He is uncreated.

DELIVERER - God rescues and saves his children.

ETERNAL - God is not limited by time. He exists outside of time.

FAITHFUL - God always keeps his promises.

GENEROUS - God gives what is best and beyond what is deserved.

GLORIOUS - God displays His greatness and worth.

GOOD - God is what is best and gives what is best. He is incapable of doing harm.

HOLY - God is perfect, pure, and without sin.

IMMUTABLE/UNCHANGING - God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE - God is beyond our understanding. We can comprehend Him in part but not in whole.

INFINITE - God has not limits in His person or on His power.

JEALOUS - God will not share his glory with another. all glory rightfully belongs to him.

JUST - god is fair in all his actions and judgements. He cannot over-punish or under-punish.

LOVING - God feels and displays infinite, unconditional affection toward his children. His love for them does not depend on their worth, response, or merit.

MERCIFUL - God does not give his children the punishment they deserve.

OMNIPOTENT/ALMIGHTY - God holds all power. nothing is too hard for God. What He wills He can accomplish.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

OMNIPRESENT - God is fully present everywhere.

OMNISCIENT - God knows everything, past, present, and future - all potential and real outcomes, all things micro and macro.

PATIENT/LONG-SUFFERING - God is untiring and bears with His children.

PROVIDER - God meets the needs of his children.

REFUGE - God is a place of safety and protection for his children.

RIGHTEOUS - God is always good and right.

SELF-EXISTENT - God depends on nothing and no one to give him life or existence.

SELF-SUFFICIENT - God is not vulnerable. He has no needs.

SOVEREIGN - God does everything according to His plan and pleasure.

TRANSCENDENT - God is not like humans. He is infinitely higher in being and action.

TRUTHFUL - Whatever God speaks or does is truth and reality.

WISE - God knows what is best and acts accordingly. He cannot choose wrongly.

WORTHY - God deserves all glory and honor and praise.

WRATHFUL - God hates all unrighteousness.



THE PROPHETS

PRAYER PROMPTS

In Daniel 1, Daniel was faced with a decision to either honor the Lord or follow the cultural customs of Babylon that dishonored the commands of God. Daniel had a deep conviction from and confidence in the Lord. Psalm 71:4-5 models this pattern and can be prayed in our own times of discernment. “Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man. For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth.”

IF TIME ALLOWS:

Help the students in your group practice memorizing the books of the Bible:

- Torah: Genesis-Deuteronomy
- History: Joshua-Esther
- Poetry: Job-Song of Solomon
- Major Prophets: Isaiah-Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea-Malachi
- Gospels: Matthew-John
- Paul’s Letters: Romans-Philemon
- General Letters: Hebrews-Revelation

MISSIONS EMPHASIS:

For the months of September and October we will be collecting money for the Connie Maxwell Children’s Home. Please visit their website for pictures and descriptions of some of the services they offer that you can share with your group. A generous donor will match all of our donations. Encourage your class to collect money and donate it in the giving funnel in the upstairs lobby. Students can donate with their families as they arrive, or you can go together as a class on the way back to the Worship Center at the end of SS.

REVIEW UNIT VERSE:

Work on memorizing this weeks verse with the students in your group. You can use the first letter of each word in the verse to help with this. For example, the unit verse would look like this:



THE PROPHETS



Application Questions

LOOK UPWARD



- How does this story apply to your relationship with God?
- What does it teach you about Him- His will and His heart?
- What aspect of His character is He inviting you to experience and enjoy?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your relationship with God?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in your relationship with God?

LOOK INWARD



- How does this story apply to your heart and your own spiritual growth?
- What does it teach you about yourself, your needs, or your goals in life?
- In what aspects of your personal life is God inviting you to grow and mature?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story inwardly?
- How will those around you benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to allow these truths to help you grow spiritually?

LOOK AROUND



- How does this story apply to your relationship with others?
- What does it teach you about how to see others and relate to them?
- What is god inviting you to do differently in your relationships?



Application Questions

LOOK OUTWARD

- How does this story apply to your ministry and mission in life- to your role in God's kingdom, in society, and in the world?
- What does it teach you about God's purposes for the world?
- What part of His mission is He inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit by applying the truths of this story in your ministry?
- How will the world benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to live out these truths in the world?

LOOK FORWARD

- How does this story apply to your future, both in this age and in eternity?
- What does it teach you about God's plan for your life, now and forever?
- What aspects of eternity is God inviting you to participate in?
- How will you benefit in the future by applying these truths now?
- How will God's kingdom benefit?
- What practical steps can you take to impact eternity now with these truths?