

First Principles

Daniel 6 | Week Six

Overview

The goal of the Fellowship is to create connections leading to authentic community, and provide biblical perspective on becoming a Christian scholar. Therefore, be sure to take time to hear from each other (15 minutes), review the lesson (30 minutes) and to pray for personal concerns and campus outreach efforts (15 minutes). Encourage participants to read the chapter in advance, using it for personal devotionals, reflecting on the Memory Verse and journaling insights from your Quiet Time. Try to connect with others outside of the Fellowship this week. In this way your spiritual and relational goals for the group can be met. Having leaders rotate discussion will allow each to share their perspective.

Where We Are Now

Last week, we saw God judge and divide the Babylonian kingdom. He was not standing by while men did their own thing. He gave Babylon to the Medes and Persians.

This Week

In chapter 6, we see Daniel suffer for the high respect he has earned from Darius the king in a story similar to the trial by fire in chapter three.

The Big Idea

The Almighty has prepared the way for us to walk in faith, no matter what we suffer.

Memory Verse

Daniel 6:10 When Daniel knew that the document had been signed, he went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem; and he got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done previously.

Looking at the Text

Read Daniel 6:1-4.

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom 120 satraps, to be throughout the whole kingdom;² and over them three high officials, of whom Daniel was one, to whom these satraps should give account, so that the king might suffer no loss.³ Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom.

1. Daniel's excellent work gets rewards and respect from his ungodly masters because he served with the intent that *the king might suffer no loss*. What would it look like to serve an advisor this way?

Daniel appears to be a skilled diplomat, administrator, and leader. He is a model for

- 1 | Called to Counter-Cultural Living
- 2 | The God Who Reveals
- 3 | Whom Will You Worship?
- 4 | The Greatest King Humbled
- 5 | Found Wanting
- 6 | First Principles
- 7 | Everlasting Kingdom
- 8 |
- 9 |
- 10 |
- 11 |
- 12 |

Get Started

Open up the session by asking someone to pray. This will help break the ice and get everyone in the practice of listening to each other.

Don't Forget

Before you start calling on people to read Scripture or pray, make sure the individual you are calling on is comfortable with the task. You never want to put someone on the spot!

All provided Scripture quotations are in the English Standard Version.

Think About It:

"Daniel acts faithfully, but God provides the protection and provision necessary for such righteousness. God is working prior to, through, and beyond Daniel's own resolve to act righteously. Such care reminds us to act righteously and let God take care of the rest that is needed for his purposes to be fulfilled." — Bryan Chapell¹

grads in his excellence, passion for seeking God and trusting Him with any outcome.

Pastor Tim Keller notes, “Daniel had all the gifts to be a full-time prophet, but he had a secular job.” He served God as a prophet-in-residence in the administrations of pagan empires. How would we advise someone with such gifts?

“If you’re a Christian and the kind of person who can get into the very top graduate schools, which means you can get the very top kinds of jobs, and you know you could have a top status and kind of life, and you know that missions and ministry is not that kind of life, you must be very careful that you are not really giving it a consideration. In other words, Christians should be thinking more about ministry and the church should be thinking about it less.”²

What would it look like if a grad student were to lend his/her expertise to the ministry of the church? In what ways would it be well received? What challenges might there be? What is one simple gift you can offer the ministry of your church?

Read 6:4-5.

⁴ Then the high officials and the satraps sought to find a ground for complaint against Daniel with regard to the kingdom, but they could find no ground for complaint or any fault, because he was faithful, and no error or fault was found in him. ⁵ Then these men said, “We shall not find any ground for complaint against this Daniel unless we find it in connection with the law of his God.”

2. They found no error in him because he was faithful. Could this be said of us? What compromises are we prone to make? What doubts do we allow to keep us from faithful service?

It may be important to note that Daniel is still a Hebrew in a pagan empire, serving in captivity. The Lord has placed him in positions of influence to serve him for an unspecified period of time. Daniel and his friends likely remembered how Joseph was accused and imprisoned wrongfully, understanding it could happen to them too. Plus they had the experience with the furnace and probably many other small threats over the years. They were not immune to injustice. There may be times that you feel like the only believer in a “pagan empire” in your grad program. How does Daniel’s example of trusting God give you a vision for trusting God in your program?

3. Even though we have worked hard to get where we are, do we fully believe that every skill and every opportunity we have has been given to us from the Lord?

This is one of the perpetual questions Christians ask themselves. It’s what walking by faith means. In our world, we are pressed to believe that spirituality is an elective, a hobby some of us enjoy. But God claims dominion over everything, so when Daniel is rewarded, he thanks God for giving it to him (note v10). When you are not sure you are going to pass your oral exams, when you feel as if you cannot hit your research or publication deadlines, when there is tension in the department, are you seeking the face of God to lead and direct you? The applications are obvious. When our paper is accepted, when we get the grant we wanted, or when we discover something different, do we thank the Lord for giving it to us? When an experiment fails or when we are asked to do something unethical, do we remember the Most High God has our back no matter what?

Think About It:

Speaking to a group of ministry leaders, Dallas Willard said a few words about success: “In another age it might have been enough for your people to know that you are devoted and that you are called of God. But we live in a world where this issue is enough to drive anyone nuts. You have people constantly surveying, ‘Is this a success?’ I often imagine people handing out little questionnaires at the end of the Sermon on the Mount about whether or not it was a success.

[Should faithfulness replace success?] I don’t think so. I’m not big on the saying that ‘All God requires is that we be faithful.’ Faithfulness means more than just doing the same things over and over. I would say that, in our faithfulness, one of the things we do is change—and sometimes we need to change before God will respond to our efforts.”³

Illustrate It: Eric Johnson, a founder of Gorilla Pictures, applies his Christian perspective to his collaborative creative work. He and his team want to respect the people involved in the film, not allowing it to be a burden to them.

“I believe that to make films that are inspiring, my first responsibility is to respect and inspire the community of people directly involved. When we started, an angel investor helped us purchase a large amount of film equipment we could not afford. This act inspired us to build a company on the same ethos.

“What’s amazing is not just that it’s fulfilling; it’s also economically viable. It’s a holistic value that

Summarize 6:6-15.

Daniel's peers could not accuse him for being corrupt (playing favorites, taking bribes or kickbacks, ignoring laws), so they set up an idolatrous situation similar to Nebuchadnezzar's image in chapter three. They lie by implying that Daniel agrees with them that everyone should show their loyalty to the king by praying only to him for 30 days. Darius, being a polytheist, thinks nothing of this law, but when the officials return to say Daniel continues to worship the Lord in defiance of the law, he knows he has been tricked.

Read 6:16-28.

¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and Daniel was brought and cast into the den of lions. The king declared to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, deliver you!"¹⁷ And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel. ¹⁸ Then the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; no diversions were brought to him, and sleep fled from him.

¹⁹ Then, at break of day, the king arose and went in haste to the den of lions. ²⁰ As he came near to the den where Daniel was, he cried out in a tone of anguish. The king declared to Daniel, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" ²¹ Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, because I was found blameless before him; and also before you, O king, I have done no harm." ²³ Then the king was exceedingly glad, and commanded that Daniel be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴ And the king commanded, and those men who had maliciously accused Daniel were brought and cast into the den of lions—they, their children, and their wives. And before they reached the bottom of the den, the lions overpowered them and broke all their bones in pieces.

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: "Peace be multiplied to you. ²⁶ I make a decree, that in all my royal dominion people are to tremble and fear before the God of Daniel,

for he is the living God, enduring forever; his kingdom shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be to the end.

²⁷ He delivers and rescues; he works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, he who has saved Daniel from the power of the lions."

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

4. Daniel goes into the lion's den with the same confidence his friends had decades ago. He knows God is able to save him, "but if not," he will not serve another god. Do we have this kind of faith or have we allowed disappointment to steal this confidence away? Would he have had the confidence to face the Lion's Den if it were not for the faithfulness and testimony of his friends in the fiery furnace? Thankfully, we don't have to answer that question. And, as you have believing friends who give testimony in your life of living through the trials of grad school, you may have confidence as well.

can't be quantified on a spreadsheet, but is now integral to our mission: 'When you give things away, you don't lose them.'"

Like Daniel, Eric doesn't follow the patterns of his industry, but asks the Lord to direct and provide for the work he has been given.⁴

Illustrate It: "The Shawshank Redemption is about a prisoner convicted of a murder he didn't commit. That prisoner escapes by crawling through a sewer line until he's outside the prison walls. The narrator describes the transaction this way: 'He crawled through a river of [dung] and came out clean on the other side.' God the Son did that, and He did it for the likes of me — so that I too, and many more like me, might come out clean on the other side. That truth doesn't just change my life after I die. It changes my life here, now." —William J. Stuntz⁵

5. What are some ways we can have confidence in God, even in the midst of seemingly unrealistic circumstances??

6. Daniel does not fear being killed or injured by the lions, but he knows he could be. What similar faith challenges do we face in our lives?

Since we already know the stories of Daniel in the lion's den and his friends in the furnace, we aren't surprised they survive. We may even tell ourselves that if we "dare to be a Daniel," we may be threatened, but we will not suffer. God will make everything work out in the end. When that is NOT the case, how should we respond

WRAPPING IT UP

Kenneth Pike, former president of the Linguistic Society of America, asks if we have ever wondered why Jesus tells Nicodemus, the theistic intellectual, that he must be born again, but we don't have a record that he said it to anyone else. The publican and the harlot know they are sinners and need help. They don't ask how it's possible to get help or whether the help makes sense to them.

But "the intellectual already has his mental outlook logically formed, a coherent system with all of the pieces fitting together in a neat mosaic such that the removal of one piece of the mosaic destroys the pattern. . . . [He] needs to be told that his system as a whole must be replaced—that he must be born again. Christianity is not an accretion; it is not something added. It is a new total outlook which is satisfied with nothing less than penetration to the farthest corners of the mind and the understanding." in what ways does the story of Daniel show that Christianity is a different outlook altogether? What are some specific ways in your program you may have a completely different outlook due to your faith in Christ?

Notes:

¹ Dr. Bryan Chapell and Richard Doster, "The Gospel According to Daniel: Our Conversation with Bryan Chapell," *byFaith*, no. 44 (Q.2.14), 38-43.

² Tim Keller, "Daniel: Living by Faith in a Secular World," Redeemer Presbyterian, Apr-May, 2000.

³ Dallas Willard, "Becoming The Kinds of Leaders Who Can Do The Job," Summer 1999 (<http://www.dwillard.org/articles/artview.asp?artID=165>).

⁴ Eric Johnson and Bethany Jenkins, "Filmmaking in Unexpected Places," July 10, 2014 (<http://thegospelcoalition.org/article/filmmaking-in-unexpected-places>).

⁵ William J. Stuntz, "Three Lessons on Suffering," March 2009 (<http://www.findinggodat.org/suffering/>).

⁶ Kenneth L. Pike, *With Heart & Mind* (Huntington Beach, Calif.: Wycliffe Bible Translators, 1962), 19-24.

As your discussion comes to a close, end the session in prayer.