

Daniel 6 - In the Lion's Den

Ice Breaker: Who is the most respected Christian you know or have known, not including members of your own family? What qualities does/did this person possess that others admire?

Daniel 6:1-9 (NIV) It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, 2 with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. 3 Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. 4 At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. 5 Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

6 So these administrators and satraps went as a group to the king and said: "May King Darius live forever! 7 The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days, except to you, Your Majesty, shall be thrown into the lions' den. 8 Now, Your Majesty, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." 9 So King Darius put the decree in writing.

1. What was the plot against Daniel? What precipitated it?

2. Why do you think the king went along with their plan?

Daniel 6:10-15 (NIV) 10 Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. 11 Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. 12 So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human being except to you, Your Majesty, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands—in accordance with the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." 13 Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." 14 When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. 15 Then the men went as a group to King Darius and said to him, "Remember, Your Majesty, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed."

3. How did Daniel respond to this attempt by enemies to trap and destroy him? Why do you think he defied the order? (1 Kings 8:44-45; Psalm 55:16-18)

1 Kings 8:44-45 (NIV) "When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to the LORD toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name, 45 then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause.

Psalm 55:16-18 (NIV) 16 As for me, I call to God, and the LORD saves me. 17 Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice. 18 He rescues me unharmed from the battle waged against me, even though many oppose me.

4. What strikes you about Daniel's habit of prayer? What needs to change in your prayer life?

5. What should be our response when others treat us poorly because of our faith? (Psalm 37:12-13; Matthew 5:10-11; Romans 8:35-39)

Psalm 37:12-13 (NIV) 12 *The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; 13 but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for he knows their day is coming.*

Matthew 5:10-11 (NIV) 10 *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.*

Romans 8:35-39 (NIV) 35 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? 36 As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." 37 No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. 38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

6. Where is the most difficult place/situation for you to stand up for your faith? (with family, at work or school, while recreating, among non-Christian friends, other?)

7. What have you found helpful in standing up for your faith?

8. What was the king's response to learning that Daniel had defied the order?

9. How do you reconcile what Daniel did with Romans 13:1-5? How does this square with your view of church and state issues? (Matthew 22:21; Acts 5:27-29)

Romans 13:1-5 (NIV) *Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. 4 For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience*

Matthew 22:17-21 (NIV) *17 Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?" 18 But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? 19 Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, 20 and he asked them, "Whose image is this? And whose inscription?" 21 "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "So give back to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's."*

Acts 5:27-29 (NIV) *27 The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood." 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"*

Daniel 6:16-24 (NIV) *So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" 17 A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. 18 Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. 19 At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. 20 When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" 21 Daniel answered, "May the king live forever! 22 My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not*

hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.” 23 The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. 24 At the king’s command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions’ den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

10. What do you think saved Daniel? (his faith, his prayers, his innocence, God’s faithfulness, lazy lions, other?)

11. When in your life have you experienced God being with you in the midst of a “lion’s den” of critics, skeptics, adversaries because of your faith? How did God keep the “lions” from destroying you?

12. How would have the experiences of Daniel and especially the story of the lion’s den encouraged the people of Israel in exile? How do these stories encourage us today?

Daniel 6:25-28 (NIV) *25 Then King Darius wrote to all the nations and peoples of every language in all the earth: “May you prosper greatly! 26 “I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. “For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. 27 He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions.” 28 So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

13. What was the response of the king when he discovered Daniel was alive?
What was the king's view of Daniel's God?

14. Can you think of a time when your faithfulness to God resulted in a non-believer either accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior, or at least acknowledging the power or faithfulness of God?

15. In what way is our situation today similar to the one Daniel and his friends lived through in these first six chapters of Daniel? (1Peter 2:11-12)

1 Peter 2:11-12 (NIV) *11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.*

16. How did Daniel and his friends bring blessings to the kings they served without compromising their identity in God? In what ways is your faith blessing (bringing value to) a godless world?