



## WEEKLY STUDY

### WEEK 3

This week we looked at the familiar story of Daniel 3—the fiery furnace. We are learning from these stories in Daniel that we will have to be devoted, different, and disciplined as we pursue the things of God. His friends were pursuing God in the same way and their faithfulness led them to the edge of death, but they kept looking to God. May your faith be so alive and deeply felt this week, that you are aware of the heat it can lead to and the faithfulness of Jesus to get you through it.

Peace of Christ,  
Dr. Mark Youngman  
Pastor of Discipleship

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit [prov.church/smallgroups](http://prov.church/smallgroups).

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

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### DAILY STUDY

#### MONDAY: DANIEL 3.1-3 (NLT)

*King Nebuchadnezzar made a gold statue ninety feet tall and nine feet wide and set it up on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.<sup>2</sup> Then he sent messages to the high officers, officials, governors, advisers, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the provincial officials to come to the dedication of the statue he had set up.<sup>3</sup> So all these officials came and stood before the statue King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.*

- Surely the irony is lost on no one. Daniel had just interpreted the king's dream in which his reign was represented by a statue that fell to the ground signifying its demise. Instead of learning the lesson, his anxiety and insecurity led him to build an impressive statue.

There were eight categories of leaders that the king summoned to see his statue. Among them were key representatives throughout the kingdom, military leaders, judges, treasurers, etc. (Some scholars believe that this could be the event referred to in Jeremiah 51.59, when King Zedekiah was summoned to Babylon.)

It may be difficult for us to imagine this scene and not be embarrassed for Nebuchadnezzar. His pride and insecurity are on full display. **Can you think of times throughout history when this has**

**been repeated? Are there ways in which you have participated in a similar spectacle? Perhaps in smaller ways we build an image that we hope others will believe in.**

- *God, I am sorry for the things that I build up for others to see that do not point to you. Amen.*

## **TUESDAY: DANIEL 3.8-12**

*But some of the astrologers went to the king and informed on the Jews.<sup>9</sup> They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “Long live the king!<sup>10</sup> You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments.<sup>11</sup> That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace.<sup>12</sup> But there are some Jews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. They pay no attention to you, Your Majesty. They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up.”*

- The astrologers identified the offenders by reminding the king that he had given these men special status. Did the king need to be reminded of his own actions? Probably not. The accusers were directing their comments equally at the three Jews and the king himself. Really, they were spewing their indignation to make a point. What their jealousy and indignation led to was the state sponsored attempted murder of the three men who would not worship the king’s statue. When our anger and jealousy are poured out to those around us, people can get hurt. **Would someone accuse you of failing to worship the false gods and statues of our day?**
- *Jesus, you laid down your life to make a way for my restoration. I want to respond by worshiping God alone, regardless of what others might say. Amen.*

## **WEDNESDAY: DANIEL 3.16-18**

*Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you.<sup>17</sup> If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty.<sup>18</sup> But even if he doesn’t, we want to make it clear to you, Your Majesty, that we will never serve your gods or worship the gold statue you have set up.”*

- Let’s be real. The reply of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the face of death is not common. Our instinct seems to be geared towards self preservation. *What must I say in order to live?* But the three offered no defense—they only demonstrated faithfulness regardless of the outcome. *God will rescue us, but even if he doesn’t in this particular moment, we will only worship him.* We have all kinds of opportunities to hedge our bets when it comes to our own faithfulness, don’t we? **Picture yourself in the shoes of Daniel’s friends. What are the various false “paths to salvation” you have to brush aside in order to worship only God?**
- *God, I want to have the faithfulness of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Fill me with strength to look to You above everything else. Amen.*

## **THURSDAY: DANIEL 3.24-27**

*...suddenly, Nebuchadnezzar jumped up in amazement and exclaimed to his advisers, “Didn’t we tie up three men and throw them into the furnace?”*

*“Yes, Your Majesty, we certainly did,” they replied.*

<sup>25</sup> “Look!” Nebuchadnezzar shouted. “I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!”

<sup>26</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar came as close as he could to the door of the flaming furnace and shouted: “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!”

So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stepped out of the fire. <sup>27</sup> Then the high officers, officials, governors, and advisers crowded around them and saw that the fire had not touched them. Not a hair on their heads was singed, and their clothing was not scorched. They didn’t even smell of smoke!

- God’s actions speak louder than our words. The words of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abendego did not convince the king or his officers and advisors. It was God literally showing up in the furnace that got their attention. However, their words of faithfulness set the stage for the king to see God. **Think about some of your conversations over the last week. When did your words allow others to see God’s action?**
- *God, may my words (or silence) make it possible for others to see you at work today. Amen.*

### FRIDAY: DANIEL 3.28-30

Then Nebuchadnezzar said, “Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue his servants who trusted in him. They defied the king’s command and were willing to die rather than serve or worship any god except their own God. <sup>29</sup> Therefore, I make this decree: If any people, whatever their race or nation or language, speak a word against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, they will be torn limb from limb, and their houses will be turned into heaps of rubble. There is no other god who can rescue like this!”

<sup>30</sup> Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon.

- It’s important to note that the king did not pledge his life to the God of the Israelites, instead he made a great footnote on his command to worship the statue he had built. According to his most recent decree, the God of the Israelites was to have a place of respect, but not worship. We can see the contrast between a God who rescues but doesn’t deserve to be worshiped, and a golden idol that does nothing and is being bowed down to. **Has your life ever led someone else to proclaim that God is a God who saves? Has faithfulness ever led to a promotion of any kind?**
- *God, you are indeed a God who saves. You are my rescuer. Use my story to allow others to know that truth. Amen.*

### SATURDAY: PSALM 31.1-5

*In you, Lord, I have taken refuge;  
let me never be put to shame;  
deliver me in your righteousness.*

<sup>2</sup> *Turn your ear to me,  
come quickly to my rescue;  
be my rock of refuge,  
a strong fortress to save me.*

<sup>3</sup> *Since you are my rock and my fortress,  
for the sake of your name lead and guide me.*

<sup>4</sup> *Keep me free from the trap that is set for me,  
for you are my refuge.*

<sup>5</sup> *Into your hands I commit my spirit;  
deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.*

- When we find ourselves in difficult situations, we are tempted to fight our way out. The witness in Daniel 3 is that God will fight for us, so our chief work is to trust in Him. In Psalm 31, David claims the same thing. Like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abendego, David had a trap set before him. He was asking for freedom from it, much like the three sought freedom from the trap set by the king's decree. It is faithfulness that leads us to ask God for freedom from our dangerous situations, and faithfulness that keeps us close to God even when God doesn't grant us freedom when we want it. **From what are you seeking rescue in this season of your life? What traps has God saved you from?**
- *Jesus, you offer to remain with me even when the flames get hot. Rekindle my faith in you, that I might go into the fire unafraid. Amen.*

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob shared these teachings learned from Daniel 3. Discuss how each one:

- a) draws from the story of Daniel 3
  - b) disrupts your sense of what is culturally acceptable
  - c) challenges you to live devoted, different, and disciplined.
- **We are called to faithfulness that is not based on circumstances.**
  - **You don't have to defend yourself.**
  - **We don't participate in idolatry.**