

***THROUGH THE FIRE* FRIENDS**

Daniel 3:1-30

- **In our *Friendology* series we're learning how to develop good and godly friendships that will be valuable and vital to our lives.**
- **Good and godly friends are important for us because they: 1) Have our back (Proverbs 17:17), 2) Help us during bad times as well as good times (Proverbs 18:24), and 3) Hold us accountable for becoming better (Proverbs 27:17).**
- **There are: 1) "for a season" friends, 2) "fair-weather" friends, 3) "fake" friends, 4) "false" friends and 5) "faithful" friends; and at times 6) "fiery trials" friends.**
- *"Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made . . . But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace.'"* (Daniel 3:14-15)
- **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were Jewish friends who were trained to be young leaders in the Babylonian kingdom (Daniel 1:1-7), and everything was going well until they together bucked the "powers" of their day (Daniel 3:1-6).**
- **We need good and godly friendships all of the time, but especially when we find ourselves going through the "fiery trials" of life (Daniel 3:1-23)**
- ***What are some lessons we learn from the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego that will enable us to live strong lives during life's most difficult times?***

We Learn From The Story In Daniel 3 That:

WE WILL HAVE TO FACE SOME <u>PERSECUTION</u>

- Babylonian Leaders to King Nebuchadnezzar - *"You issued a decree requiring all the people to bow down and worship the gold statue . . . That decree also states that those who refuse to obey must be thrown into a blazing furnace. But there are some Jews - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego . . . They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up."* (Daniel 3:8-12)
- **There will always be people opposed to the values and lifestyles of God's people.**

- *"Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."* (2 Timothy 3:12)
- ***Why are some people so opposed to the values and lifestyles of God's people?***
- Jesus - *"God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right. God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you because you are My followers."* (Matthew 5:10-11)
- **We can expect pushback from some people because of the lives we live and the Lord we love; but the Lord has promised to bless us in spite of that persecution.**
- Jesus - *"God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you . . . Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven."* (Matthew 5:11-12)
- ***What kind of Persecution have I experienced, and how have I responded to it?***

We Learn From The Story In Daniel 3 That:

WE WILL EXPERIENCE BIG <u>PROBLEMS</u>

- *"Nebuchadnezzar said to them, 'Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you refuse to serve my gods or to worship the gold statue I have set up? I will give you one more chance to bow down and worship the statue I have made . . . But if you refuse, you will be thrown immediately into the blazing furnace.'"* (Daniel 3:14-15)
- **People experience problems on a regular basis, but sometimes we experience big, terrifying, overwhelming problems in our lives (John 16:33).**
- ***Why does God allow good people to have bad problems in their lives?***
- **Sometimes God allows us to experience big problems in order to *Discipline us*.**
    - *The Lord disciplines those He loves."* (Hebrews 12:6)
- **Sometimes God allows us to experience big problems in order to *Deepen our Relationship with Him*.**
    - Paul - *"We were crushed and completely overwhelmed, and we thought we would never live through it. In fact, we expected to die. But as a result, we learned not to rely on ourselves, but on God . . ."* (2 Corinthians 1:8-9)
- **Sometimes God allows us to experience big problems in order to *Develop us*.**
    - Paul - *"We can rejoice when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they are good for us—they help us learn to endure. And endurance develops strength of character in us."* (Romans 5:3-4)
- **Many people deny they have real problems in their lives, but when we deny our problems are real, we deny God the opportunity to help us with our problems.**
- ***What kind of problems am I dealing with right now that seem too big for me?***

We Learn From The Story In Daniel 3 That:

WE NEED TO HAVE THE RIGHT <u>PARTNERS</u>

- *"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. 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. 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."* (Daniel 3:16-18)
- **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were committed to God and to one another, which reminds us that we should choose godly people to be our "best friends."**

- *"I am a friend to anyone who fears You (O God) - anyone who obeys Your commandments."* (Psalm 119:63)
- **We need to have Friends who have *Convictions.***
    - *"There are some Jews - Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego - whom you have put in charge of the province of Babylon. . . . They refuse to serve your gods and do not worship the gold statue you have set up."* (Daniel 3:12)
- **We need some Friends who have *Courage*.**
    - *"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, 'O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you."* (Daniel 3:16)
- **We need some Friends who have *Confidence in the Lord*.**
    - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego - *"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."* (Daniel 3:17)
- **We need some Friends who are *Committed* to the Lord.**
    - Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego - *"But even if He (God) 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."* (Daniel 3:18)
- **Our best friends will have a great impact on the decisions, direction and destiny of our lives, so they need to be like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.**
- ***Who are my "best friends", and do they have the values and characteristics that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had?***

We Learn From The Story In Daniel 3 That:

WE CAN TRUST IN GOD'S <u>PROVISION</u>

- *"Nebuchadnezzar was so furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego . . . He commanded that the furnace be heated seven times hotter than usual. Then he ordered some of the strongest men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the blazing furnace."* (Daniel 3:19-20)
- **Sometimes we feel like we're facing hopeless situations, but nothing is hopeless as long as we know the Lord and are committed to Him.**
- *"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. 'Look!' Nebuchadnezzar shouted. 'I see four men, unbound, walking around in the fire unharmed! And the fourth looks like a god!'"* (Daniel 3:24-25)
- **It is often in our most difficult times that we experience the Lord's presence in very profound ways.**.
- *"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. 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!"* (Daniel 3:26-27)
- **There's nothing that God cannot do and often will not do when His people have the faith and fortitude that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had.**

- ***What kind of miracle do I need to see God do in my life or someone else's life?***

- *"Then Nebuchadnezzar said, "Praise to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! He sent his angel to rescue His servants who trusted in Him. . . . There is no other god who can rescue like this!' Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to even higher positions in the province of Babylon."* (Daniel 3:28-30)
- **When we're partnering with the right people, living godly lives and trusting in the Lord, the Lord will take us to new levels in our lives.**
- ***What is the Lord saying to me through today's message?***