

Sun., July 25 -

Series: Strange Fire Series: (Daniel) "Living in the Fire: Stand Out"

Series Verse: Daniel 3:25 "25 He replied, "Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren't hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods."

Memory Verse: Daniel 3:25 "25 He replied, "Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren't hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods."

Message: Living in the Fire: Stand Out

Text: "Whoever is faithful with little is also faithful with much, and the one who is dishonest with little is also dishonest with much." -Luke 16:10

Reading of Scripture & Sermon Scripture: Daniel 1:1-21 (Dramatic Reading Team)

Blurb: This Sunday we turn to Daniel to learn how we can live faithfully and steadily through the fires of life. Because of the Holy Spirit burning within us, we can do right no matter what we face! We begin with the Daniel as a teenager. He was presented with an amazing offer. The only problem is that it required him to compromise his beliefs. What did Daniel do? What do we do? Come learn how to Stand Out!

[Recorded Worship Beginning]

WELCOME -Pastor Andrew

MEMORY VERSE: -Pastor Andrew

"The king replied, 'Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren't hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods.'" -Daniel 3:25

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

[Live Worship Beginning]

GATHERING SONG: *Another in the Fire* -Sanctify

WELCOME -Pastor David

MEMORY VERSE: -Pastor David

"The king replied, 'Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren't hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods.'" -Daniel 3:25

WORSHIP MUSIC SET -Sanctify

Worship prayer -Pastor Andrew

LOVE MOMENT: Missionary Offering and Concert Aug. 4**PRAYERS:** “The Apostles’ Creed” -Pastor David

Introduction

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

David: Prayer to God the Father

All: And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

Was crucified, died, and was buried.

On the third day he rose again,

He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

David: Prayer to God the Son

All: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

David: Prayer to God the Holy Spirit

[Both Recorded & Live Worship]**GENERATIONAL BRIDGE & SCRIPTURE READING:** Daniel 1:1-21 -Dramatic Reading Team

We turn to the Old Testament prophet Daniel. Over the next six weeks we'll be reading a chapter each Sunday from Daniel. This week is chapter 1, and it sets up the story of Daniel and his three faithful friends when they are taken captive into Babylon. Daniel 1:1-21,

“1 In the third year of the rule of Judah’s King Jehoiakim [juh-HOI-uh-kim], Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar [neb-you-kad-NEZ-ur] came to Jerusalem and attacked it. 2 The Lord handed Judah’s King Jehoiakim over to Nebuchadnezzar, along with some of the equipment from God’s house. Nebuchadnezzar took these to Shinar [SHIGH-nahr], to his own god’s temple, putting them in his god’s treasury.

“3 Nebuchadnezzar instructed his highest official Ashpenaz [ASH-peh-nazz] to choose royal descendants and members of the ruling class from the Israelites— 4 good-looking young men without defects, skilled in all wisdom, possessing knowledge, conversant with learning, and capable of serving in the king’s palace. Ashpenaz was to teach them the Chaldean [kal-DEE-an] language and its literature. 5 The king assigned these young men daily allotments from his own food and from the royal wine. Ashpenaz was to teach them for three years so that at the end of that time they could serve before the king. 6 Among these young men from the Judeans were Daniel, Hananiah [han-uh-NIE-uh], Mishael [MISH-eh-uhl], and Azariah [az-ah-RYE-ah]. 7 But the chief official gave them new names. He named Daniel “Belteshazzar” [bell-tuh-SHAZ-zur], Hananiah “Shadrach” [SHAD-rak], Mishael “Meshach” [MEE-shak], and Azariah “Abed-nego” [uh-BED-nee-go].

“8 Daniel decided that he wouldn’t pollute himself with the king’s rations or the royal wine, and he appealed to the chief official in hopes that he wouldn’t have to do so. 9 Now God had established faithful loyalty between Daniel and the chief official; 10 but the chief official said to Daniel, ‘I’m afraid of my master, the king, who has mandated what you are to eat and drink. What will happen if he sees your faces looking thinner than the other young men in your group? The king will have my head because of you!’

“11 So Daniel spoke to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: 12 ‘Why not test your servants for ten days? You could give us a diet of vegetables to eat and water to drink. 13 Then compare our appearance to the appearance of the young men who eat the king’s food. Then deal with your servants according to what you see.’

“14 The guard decided to go along with their plan and tested them for ten days. 15 At the end of ten days they looked better and healthier than all the young men who were eating the king’s food. 16 So the guard kept taking away their rations and the wine they were supposed to drink and gave them vegetables instead. 17 And God gave knowledge, mastery of all literature, and wisdom to these four men. Daniel himself gained understanding of every type of vision and dream.

“18 When the time came to review the young men as the king had ordered, the chief official brought them before Nebuchadnezzar. 19 When the king spoke with them, he found no one as good as Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. So they took their place in the king’s service. 20 Whenever the king consulted them about any aspect of wisdom and understanding, he found them head and shoulders above all the dream interpreters and enchanters in his entire kingdom. 21 And Daniel stayed in the king’s service until the first year of King Cyrus [SIGH-russ].”

MESSAGE: Strange Fire Series (Daniel) Living in the Fire #1: Stand Out

PP#1: (Daniel) Living in the Fire: Stand Out

“Whoever is faithful with little is also faithful with much, and the one who is dishonest with little is also dishonest with much.” -Luke 16:10

(Daniel) Living in the Fire: Stand Out. Luke 16:10, Jesus taught, “Whoever is faithful with little is also faithful with much, and the one who is dishonest with little is also dishonest with much.”

When I was a boy, I learned in Sunday School *The Daniel Song*: “Dare to be a Daniel! Dare to stand alone. Dare to have a purpose firm, Dare to make it known.”

PP#2: Strange Fire!

Easter Series: God Is an All-Consuming Fire!

Pentecost Series: The Fire Within

Summer Series: Living in the Fire (Daniel)

Ever since Easter we’ve been learning how God is an all-consuming fire. Then, in Pentecost, we learned how God’s all-consuming fire comes and burns inside each of us as the indwelling Holy Spirit. Now, today, we start our summer series of how God’s Spirit burning inside of us helps us to live faithfully as disciples of Jesus as we live in the fire of the challenges of daily life. And we’re

going to take a closer look over the next six weeks at the Old Testament prophet Daniel and his three faithful friends to learn how we, today, can live faithfully in the ongoing fires of life.

PP#3: *Image of Noodles by Leonardo Trademark at*

<https://trademarks.justia.com/owners/noodles-by-leonardo-inc-240561/>

The summer before I went to college, I worked in a pasta factory called Noodles by Leonardo. It was 50 miles away, but I didn't mind since I got *above* minimum wage and got to drive my motorcycle to and from work.

One day at work, Renae, the in-house quality control inspector, came around and swabbed the palms of all of our hands. Within minutes the factory line stopped. Some hands were too dirty to pass inspection. The whole shift's product was condemned.

Now, the factory was small and struggled to compete against the giants in the industry. Losing that much product would have significant financial impact, and so management made the "cost-effective" decision to ship it all anyway. People boil the pasta. It's safe. So, the boss ordered Renae to sign the clearance, even though the pasta may have been contaminated. She refused.

There was a lot of yelling in the offices. If Renae refused to sign the clearance, management said that they would simply get another one who would. There was a lot on the line for her. She needed her income to support her kids and her husband as he was going to school. All their hopes, dreams, and family plans of many years could be ruined by her action that day. All she hoped for was at stake. But, was it worth it to stand by her convictions: to live what she believed?

PP#4: Timeline of Israel (all dates B.C.)

- 1440 Exodus & Law given at Mt. Sinai
- 1000 King David
- 721 Assyria conquers northern kingdom of Israel
- 625 Babylon conquers Assyria
- 605 Daniel taken captive to Babylon
- 586 Babylon conquers southern kingdom of Judah: "Babylonian Exile"
- 516 Babylonian exiles return to Jerusalem

It's tough. We've all been there at one time or another, right? The Bible calls this way of living "holiness." To be holy means to live differently, to live for God: even when—and especially when—it isn't easy. And that's what the book of Daniel is all about.

Let's back up a minute. When the Israelites were led out of Egypt, God gave them the 10 Commandments and the Law. He told them to live differently in the world, to be holy. He then brought them into the Promised Land, where they settled in. Saul, David and Solomon were their first three kings. Then, the country split into Israel in the North and Judah in the south. The Assyrian Empire—present day Syria—conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 B.C. and took them over. But Judah survived, thanks to it's godly king. But then the Babylonian Empire re-surged—present day Iraq—and conquered the Assyrians in 625 B.C. Then, in 605 B.C., King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked Judah. Judah had an evil king, Jehoiakim, and so God did not protect them. Instead, Jehoiakim made a deal with King Nebuchadnezzar, to become his vassal, in exchange for a large amount of tribute. Part of that tribute was a collection of some of the best and brightest teenagers from the royal and noble families of Jerusalem.

PP#5: <u>Hebrew name:</u>	<u>Babylonian name:</u>
Daniel	Belteshazzar
Hananiah	Shadrach
Mishael	Meshach
Azariah	Abed-Nego

Four of these young men become the basis for the story of Daniel. One was, of course, Daniel himself, who was probably about 16 at the time. With him were Hananiah [han-uh-NIE-uh], Mishael [MISH-eh-uhl], and Azariah [az-ah-RYE-ah], whom we know better by their Babylonian names of Shadrach [SHAD-rak], Meshach [MEE-shak], and “Abed-nego” [uh-BED-nee-go].

So, they were taken captive, ripped from their families and lives and sent far away to the distant capital of Babylon. Talk about dashed hopes and dreams, right? Few of us have ever experienced anything that traumatic...I mean, these were high schoolers!

Well, one day, King Nebuchadnezzar wanted to train some of the brightest captives in the ways of Babylonian government so they could then manage the other captives. These four were chosen. They were offered special treatment, and favors, and the best education. All they needed to do was to “get on board,” to follow the rules, to conform to the prescribed way of life. Then, they would have a life of ease, convenience, honor and position. But, if they didn’t follow orders—if they even questioned those orders—they would literally lose their heads.

PP#6: *Image representing a tempting option but requiring a compromise in character*

Isn’t that the way it often happens in life? Things get hard, don’t work out, start falling apart. We get to the end of our ropes, and when we become desperate, then along comes an opportunity. It may not be our first choice, or even one we like, but it just might solve our problem and make everything better. Yet, be careful! Sometimes that opportunity may be our time of greatest testing. Does it require us to compromise our convictions, ask us to do what is against our moors, or make us sell out our soul in some way?

That was these three teens. They lost everything. Their futures were bleak. But suddenly they are chosen for a special position with the king. They were offered a scholarship, a promotion. All they had to do was do what they were told.

But in there came the test. These Hebrew boys, faithful to the Jewish Law, were given food considered unclean by the Jewish Law. All they had to do was to eat the food put in front of them. Join the Babylonian way of life. When in Rome, do as the Romans!

PP#7: (Daniel) Living in the Fire: Stand Out

1. Living differently is risky!

I can imagine the self-rationalization. “Why should we turn down this offer? God hasn’t been very helpful so far, has He? Besides, maybe this is a gift from God? And now that they are no longer in Jerusalem, do they really need to follow the Jewish laws? Everyone else was eating that food. Does it really matter, really? I mean, if we don’t we could be killed! Besides, doesn’t God know the situation? Wouldn’t God understand?

Sounds like a lot of self-rationalizing that you and I do, doesn’t it?

Daniel and his friends show us here that living for God—living differently, living in holiness—is hard. It makes us stand out, and it can be very risky!

Verse 8 says that “Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king’s food or with the wine that he drank. He asked the chief official to allow him not to defile himself.” Now, the official liked Daniel, but he was also worried that if the boys under his charge seemed less healthy, the king would hold him responsible and have his head, literally!

Daniel was facing real risk. Daring to stand out for your convictions, to live God’s different way, to live out your faith, to strive for holiness, can be very costly. What if you were asked to do something, like to sign a clearance form for contaminated pasta? By the way, Renae refused to sign the forms, and she was fired.

PP#8: (Daniel) Living in the Fire: Stand Out

1. Living differently is risky!
2. Faithfulness prepares us for bigger battles coming

So, why doesn’t God smooth our way when we choose to live for Him? Why does God allow hardship and troubles, allow us to suffer when we are being faithful? Here is the second lesson Daniel and his faithful friends are teaching us here: sometimes it is, because the risks we are facing are a preparation for bigger spiritual battles that lie ahead. Starting with this first chapter, the Book of Daniel goes from one cliff-hanging, spine-tingling adventure to the next. A quick scan of the next five chapters reveal more encounters with death-dealing kings, nightmare visions, a giant golden idol, a foray into a fiery furnace, a king turned into a wild animal, and a prophet thrown to the lions. Hollywood would love this material! There were lots of tests and trials ahead for Daniel, but it started here, with this first struggle. And when we look at Daniel, we can see that God uses trials and tests—although never allowing more than we can stand if we ask Him for help—to stretch, mold, and strengthen us for greater work in His Kingdom and living lives that can accomplishing greater things for God. When we are faithful through the risks, we are tested and strengthened. God can trust us with greater things when we are able to stand first with lighter things.

PP#9: Two images, 1. Jesus tempted in the wilderness, and 2. Jesus praying in Gethsemane

Think of Jesus, who at the beginning of His ministry was driving into the desert for 40 days. Out there, in the wilderness, He denied Himself. For 40 days He fasted. The Bible tells us that He was tested and tempted. Why would God allow that to happen to His own, wonderful, cherished, beloved Son? Because Jesus came to fulfill a purpose. And on the road ahead of Him would be even greater challenges, greater tests. How easy it would be to be swayed into being the king the people wanted Him to be! How easy it would have been to have legions at your feet, to lead a mighty nation, to have the respect of the entire world, to be the greatest national hero the world had ever seen? Wouldn’t that have been easier than the cross? Wouldn’t it be easier to settle for the cheers of the crowds? The praise of the other leaders? But, by the time Jesus got to the Garden of Gethsemane, He was able to pray, “Not my will, but yours, O God!”

Imagine, if He hadn’t been strengthened by earlier trials? Imagine if He hadn’t been forged with resolve from the time of testing in the wilderness? He may have become the greatest earthly king ever, but He wouldn’t have been our Messiah, our Deliverer.

Daniel’s first challenge was whether or not to eat defiled food. Daniel and his young friends chose to stand by their faith, stand by their principles, to stick out, to look weird, and be different. Daniel proposes a test. Give him and his friends only vegetables and water for 10 days, and then compare them with the others. Verse 15 says that “At the end of the ten days it was seen that they were healthier than all the others who ate the king’s food.”

Now, God honored that and preserved them that day, yes, but God did not give them an easy life. God preserved them in order to prepare them for greater difficulties ahead. Daniel made some enemies that day, and going forward those enemies would continue to target this faithful group.

PP#10: (Daniel) Living in the Fire: Stand Out

1. Living differently is risky!
2. Faithfulness prepares you for bigger battles coming
3. Faithfulness enables God to trust you with greater things

But also notice that God granted them deep learning, wisdom, and understanding far beyond the others. Why? As a reward for being faithful? To give them favor with the king? Well...maybe. OR, maybe because God had more for them to do ahead. And here is the third lesson we see in Daniel about being faithful. Their faithfulness enabled God to trust them with greater things. He gave Daniel the ability to discern dreams and visions.

Think about that. Do you want greater understanding? Do you want greater discernment? Wisdom? God is showing us through Daniel an important thing: God gives understanding and usefulness to those who are faithful to Him, who are faithful in reading His words...who are faithful in worship...who are faithful in prayer...who are faithful with their sexuality...who are faithful with their money...who faithfully stand for what they believe. If you want to live a significant, real life, making a difference for God, then you need to be faithful in these routine works of piety.

Jesus practiced regular prayer, Scripture reading, worship attendance each week, faithfulness in the little things, in smaller challenges, and this made Him steady and able to be faithful for God in far more difficult things.

PP#11: *Image of Corrie Ten Boom and her book, The Hiding Place*

I have to bring up Corrie Ten Boom again. She's one of my heroes. She and her family helped hide Jews from the Nazis during World War II. Even though they did good, she and her family were found out and were sent to Auschwitz. In addition to the brutal conditions and inhumane labor, the women in her bunker all got head lice. This set Corrie's sister over the edge. She cried to Corrie, "This is too much. I can't pray to a God who has abandoned us and has even left us with lice." Corrie said to her, "This is our time to see what kind of faith we do have. This is our test - this, right here! Starting today, we're not giving up. We are going to pray. We are going to pray for even this. We are going to pray even about the lice."

Corrie's sister and both parents died at Auschwitz. Years afterward, Corrie Ten Boom toured the world sharing her story and testifying how God carried her and her sister through something they couldn't have endured alone. Hundreds heard her testimony and came to faith in Jesus. Corrie said, "Who could have known, that when I was facing the horror of the concentration camps, that God was preparing me for something greater than simple earthly comforts. He used me to bring others right into Heaven itself!"

PP#12: *Compelling image with subtitle, "Dare to be a Daniel!"*

Daniel's experience was like Corrie Ten Boom's. He wasn't rescued from earthly trials because he was holy. Daniel was still a slave and would remain one into his 90s. His people were still enslaved, and would be for decades. He would never again see his homeland.

And yet, because Daniel and his friends dared to stand out, to pursue holiness despite the risk, because they dared to stand in this time of testing and honor God, God continued to use them as amazing witnesses for His kingdom, and others saw how God worked in their lives and were encouraged in their faithfulness especially in the most difficult situations. And you and I, here today, can look at Daniel and be emboldened in our faithfulness. The burning Holy Spirit within us calls us to faithfulness in our lives, no matter what fire we face. Living differently is risky. But faithfulness in little things makes us able to be faithful in harder things coming. And God can use our faithfulness now to entrust us with greater responsibilities for His Kingdom.

So, church, “Dare to be a Daniel. Dare to stand alone. Dare to have a purpose firm. Dare to make it known.”

Amen.

[RECORDED WORSHIP ONLY] PRAYERS: “The Apostles’ Creed” -Pastor David

Introduction

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

David: Prayer to God the Father

All: And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,

Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,

Was crucified, died, and was buried.

On the third day he rose again,

He ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

David: Prayer to God the Son

All: I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

David: Prayer to God the Holy Spirit

[IN-PERSON WORSHIP ONLY] CLOSING SONG: -Sanctify

OFFERING: -Pastor David

-To give of your monies to God’s work through this church, you can give in person, mail it in, drop it off or, most conveniently, you can make an electronic transfer or a debit card payment on the church website or by using the “square” in the bulletin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS -Pastor David

Next Sunday’s message: Daniel Chapter 2 - Living in the Fire: Stand Up!

MEMORY VERSE -Pastor David

“The king replied, ‘Look! I see four men, unbound, walking around inside the fire, and they aren’t hurt! And the fourth one looks like one of the gods.’” -Daniel 3:25

BENEDICTION -Pastor David