



## NG Study Guide: Dan. 3:1-30 “Faith in the Fire” [5.31.20]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### The Study

**Thesis:** There are people who will walk on hot coals for the rush to see what *they* can do. Daniel’s three friends have their faith tested by fire not to see what they can do, but trusting what *God* can do. Today, we discover the God who will deliver us, and the benefit of trusting Him, as we consider the testing of faith by fire.

**1. Bible prophecy and Daniel 3:** In this chapter, Daniel is curiously absent as his three friends experience the testing of their faith in the fiery furnace. This may be significant regarding Bible prophecy. The fiery furnace is considered a symbol of the Great Tribulation, when God’s judgment is poured out during the last seven years of the earth as we know it. Daniel is a picture of the Church, gone or raptured prior to judgment. The three Hebrews are a picture of Jews who go through the Great Tribulation. Nebuchadnezzar is a picture of the Antichrist who commands to be worshiped or face death [Rev. 13]. God is revealed as with His people the Jews, and eager to restore all who would repent and yield to Him.

### 2. Intense testing reveals your faith [1-18]

#### Your commitment to God will be tested [v.1-7]

Nebuchadnezzar had a dream where he saw this large image (like an Oscar) with a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, belly and thighs were bronze, legs iron, but feet iron and clay. God gave Daniel the interpretation regarding four Gentile empires and Babylon was the head of gold [Dan. 2]. The king erects a 90 x 9 foot all gold statue seeking to exalt himself. The king gathered all **the** leaders in his empire to come to the dedication [2-3]. Then the command was given that once the band began to play that everyone was to bow down and worship the golden image [5]. This was a test of the leaders’ allegiance to the king. The penalty for failing to worship the idol was to be cast into a fiery furnace as punishment for treason [6]. Similarly, early Christians were martyred not because they worshiped Jesus, but because they refused to worship the emperor. So, when the music began, seemingly all the leaders fell down and worshipped the idol [7]. Here’s the test: In the Ten Commandments, God emphasizes that His people are not to worship any other god, nor bow to any image [Ex. 20:3-5]. What did Daniel’s friends do? Would they obey God in the midst of such testing?

#### Your commitment to God will generate persecution [8-18]

Babylonian leaders went to the king to accuse Daniel’s three friends of not paying homage [8-11]. They do not serve the king’s gods, nor did they worship the idol that the king erected [12]. They are being accused of being disloyal to the king and the values of the kingdom. The king was furious and commanded the three to appear before him [13]. When he asks them whether the charges are true [14], you can imagine there was a tone of intimidation to compel compliance with the values of the kingdom. The king plainly tells them, if you comply and worship the king’s gods and the idol he erected then all will be *good*, but if not they *will immediately be thrown into the fiery furnace* [15]. The king threatens them to compel them to disregard God’s commands. The king asks indignantly, *who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?* [15]. We saw in the last chapter that Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged there is a true and living God [2:46-47],

but did not yield to Him, or know Him. The king continues to see himself in control. The king's question really is the critical issue: who can truly deliver, and whom shall you worship?

You can sense the tension increase and the heat rise in this drama. Daniel's friends replied to the king, *our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king.* <sup>18</sup> *But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up"* [17-18]. They affirm their unwavering trust in God. They believe that God is able to deliver and will deliver, and God chooses not to deliver they will not worship an idol or false god [18]. They will trust that God is good and stay committed to Him whether things go the way they want or not.

Like Job, who declared, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" [Job 13:15]. In Acts 12, God delivered Peter from martyrdom, but did not spare James. God nevertheless is trustworthy.

Most of us will not be faced with the threat of actual martyrdom for our faith in Christ. Unfortunately, everyone who desires to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution [2Tim. 3:12]. If you choose to follow Jesus, you will be ridiculed, shunned, opposed, or perhaps face hostility from family, friends, fellow students, co-workers, and neighbors. You will be pressured to disregard God's commandments or suffer hardship and loss. We are called to present ourselves as living sacrifices to God [Rom. 12:1-2], however the problem with living sacrifices is that when the fire gets hot, they tend to want to get off the altar. Ideally, we can recognize progress as we grow in our faith, and through the process have discovered God's faithfulness. God's faithfulness is the reason why we should trust.

### **3. Intense testing reveals Jesus [19-30]**

#### **Where is Jesus in your intense time of testing?**

The king was full of fury, and you can imagine the intensity of his expression [19]. He orders the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual. The pressure to conform increases as the situation gets hotter literally and figuratively. Per the king's order the young Jews were tied-up and thrown into the furnace [21,23]. The fire was so intense, the flames killed the king's men who threw the Hebrews into the fire [22]. The king then looked, marveled, and confirmed that they had thrown three men into the fire [24]. Yet, there were four walking in the midst of the fire, unhurt, *and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.* [25].

Jesus is with you in the times of testing [25]. This is a *Christophany* or pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. Has not Jesus promised His followers that He would be with them always until the end of the age [Matt. 28:20].

Testing refines you, grows you, and removes things that bind you. The only things that were destroyed in the fire were the ropes. Controlled fires are good for the growth of forests and Jesus' followers. Sometimes it's better for Jesus to be an asbestos suit than fire extinguisher.

Jesus is revealed to others through your testing [25-30]

The king commanded the three Hebrews to come out and present themselves to the king, and they did [26]. The king and his leaders saw that there was no harm to them, their clothes, not even the smell of fire [27].

Nebuchadnezzar, refers to the three Hebrews as *servants of the Most High God* [26]. The king praised God, *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!* [28]. The king declares that God delivered His servants who trusted Him [28], and that *no other God can deliver like this* [29]. Then, the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego [30].

The faith and willingness to trust God during a time of great testing reveals your Deliverer to others. The king's question in verse 15, "Who is the god who will deliver you?" was answered by the king himself, when he acknowledged that the God of the Jews had delivered those who were loyal to Him, and that there is no other God who can deliver.

The three Hebrews are commended for their faith, and enshrined in the Hall of Faith in Hebrews 11 ("quenched the violence of fire" Heb. 11:34). Yet, even when we fail the testing of our faith, Jesus is revealed. Peter denied Jesus three times, the rooster crowed, and Peter looked across the courtyard and locked eyes with Jesus [Matt. 26:34-75]. Peter wept. He failed the test. He was ashamed, guilty, humbled, and he ran from Jesus. Jesus, however, in three days would be resurrected and would soon thereafter pursue and restore Peter [Jn. 21].

That my friends, is why Jesus is the hero of Daniel 3.

#### **Study Guide Qs**

Q1. How are you doing this week? What is some good news? Any struggles?

Q2. What have you learned about God, life, and yourself during this season of testing?

Q3. What are some ways that your faith has been tested?

Q4. What are some benefits that you have experienced by trusting God?

**“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)**

**1. Read about Peter’s denial of Jesus in Matt. 26: 34-75, and Jesus’ restoration of Peter in John 21. What did you learn about God, faith, and yourself?**

**2. Here is a fantastic animated video overview of Daniel from the Bible Project**  
**<https://bibleproject.com/explore/daniel/>**

**Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

**About every two weeks, I reach out to my neighbors via email or text to see how they are doing, and ask if I can help (e.g. Supermarket), and let them know I’m praying for them.**

**Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

**Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don’t force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

**Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn’t enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The “Digging Deeper” section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the “Digging Deeper” section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**

**a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.