

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

JULY 19 - 23, 2021



**COURSE** SERMON SERIES  
5/9 - 8/1  
**CORRECTIONS**

THE MINOR PROPHETS

# MONDAY

## Daniel 6:1-23

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Daniel in the lions' den is a famous biblical story. However, it is often overlooked that Daniel was an old man when this incident occurred. He had lived faithfully, experiencing Judah's exile to Babylon as a teenager only to rise to prominence in Babylonian leadership due to God's favor and his own faithfulness. Even as Babylon gave way to Medo-Persian rule, Daniel endured as an elderly, prominent leader in the world's then-leading empire.

Daniel's godliness and God's blessings, however, prompted envious political rivals to plot his destruction. His enemies duped King Darius into issuing a decree that compelled worship of the king alone, knowing that Daniel would remain faithful to God and thereby violate this order. Daniel's "noncompliance" earned him a night in the lions' den despite Darius' related reluctance and appreciation of Daniel.

Darius' distress over Daniel's circumstances is interesting: "*The king said to Daniel, 'May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!'*" (Daniel 6:16) and, later, "*the king ... spent the night without eating and ... could not sleep*" (v. 18). Daniel's life had revealed God to this king; the prophet's faithfulness, talent, courage, and purity glorified the living God.

Daniel's example is timely—it is often unpopular, even dangerous in some places, to follow Christ in the modern world. Many may wish

to silence our witness—sometimes these might even be family members, friends, classmates, or neighbors. However, if you have the faith to withstand peer pressure, God will assist you. *“Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand”* (Isaiah 41:10).

God does not leave us to face fears and challenges alone. The *King of kings* (Revelation 19:16) is stronger than the king of beasts and greater than the king of Persia. The Lord stands with those who stand for Him—He is faithful and *“mighty to save”* (Isaiah 63:1)! To whom can you be a “Daniel” this week? Where can you exhibit God-honoring courage, your example encouraging others to live in purity and truth?

## QUESTIONS

Why did Daniel continue his practice of regular prayer despite knowing that it might prove costly? Why was King Darius, the one who approved the decree, worried about Daniel’s well-being?

## PRAYERS FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Pray for all the kids attending VBS this year. Please pray that they would experience the love of God throughout the week, as well as come to understand the sacrifice of Jesus for them. Pray for their safety throughout all the activities.

# TUESDAY

## Daniel 3:7-29

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Yesterday we considered Daniel's faithfulness amidst a life-threatening trial. Today's events happened years earlier, sometime after young Daniel and his friends had been carried off to Babylon. Like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego remained faithful to God despite their devotion exposing them to deathly circumstances.

The empire's then-ruling king, Nebuchadnezzar, had issued a decree compelling worship of his golden image. These young Jews' refusal to honor the statue subjected them to the king's ire and consequences: death by a fiery furnace. When offered a last chance to compromise, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego declared to Nebuchadnezzar, *"If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to deliver us from it ... But even if He does not ... we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up"* (Daniel 3:17-18).

Our VBS theme this week is "The Circus and God's Mighty Wonders." These faithful Jewish boys would be more than fire-eaters, but fire-endurers with God's protection.

Nebuchadnezzar had the furnace heated to seven times normal, so hot that even the soldiers taking them to it perished (3:19-22). Regardless, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego survived the furnace untouched. As the king witnessed this, he exclaimed, *"I see four men walking around in*

*the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods” (v. 25). God Himself protected them amidst this trial!*

Though we are unlikely to face a fiery furnace, we all can feel trapped, alone or abandoned at times. However, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, never forget that God is always with you. God’s faithfulness, and theirs, witnessed mightily to this pagan king, *“Praise be to the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who has ... rescued His servants! ... for no other god can save in this way” (vv. 28-29).*

God is with us in good times and bad—He stands with you, inspires you, and provides in the loneliest times and darkest hours. God protected these three who chose facing a fiery furnace versus praising a false god. That same God desires a personal relationship with you in Jesus Christ!

## QUESTIONS

Who was *“the fourth [who] looks like a son of the gods” (v. 25)* in the fiery furnace with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego?

Why did King Nebuchadnezzar respond as he did to these boys being unharmed by the furnace?

## PRAYERS FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Please lift up all the volunteers and teachers at VBS in prayer this week. Pray for strength, love, and joy as they teach children about the Bible and care for them. Pray for their protection as they make themselves available to serve the Lord.

# WEDNESDAY

## 1 Samuel 17-18

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The “strong man”—one who would dazzle and entertain with amazing feats of strength—was prominent in old times circuses. The shepherd David, Israel’s future king, was a notable biblical “strong man”— in David’s case, however, he ascribed his strength solely to God. Today we consider David’s early career, including his famous battle with the Philistine giant, Goliath.

Israel’s first king, Saul, started well but eventually submitted to pride and entitlement, steering him from God’s ways and eventually costing him his kingdom. God directed prophet Samuel to visit Jesse to select Israel’s second king from among his sons. David was Jesse’s youngest, a shepherd boy considered least among his brothers—so insignificant that he was excluded initially as the family met Samuel. But God’s ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9).

After Samuel anointed David as Israel’s future king, the fearsome Philistine hero, Goliath (9+ feet tall, 1 Samuel 17:4), challenged Israel as the sides readied for battle. Only David among the Israelites did not tremble before Goliath; emboldened by God’s love, he volunteered to fight the giant warrior, representing both Israel and the living God. David’s faith is easily underestimated: he armed himself with a slingshot (rather than sword) and armor and “*chose five smooth stones from*

the stream” (v. 40)—David prepared also to battle Goliath’s brothers! In pitting David against Goliath, “*God chose what is weak ... to shame the strong*” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Following his God-given victory, David continued to triumph, gaining notoriety and provoking King Saul’s jealousy. Even Saul’s own son, Jonathan, became David’s close ally and Saul’s daughter, Michal, became his wife. Saul, threatened by David’s ascent, put David in perilous situations hoping to destroy his successor. But God was with David throughout, enabling him to become Israel’s second king.

David’s courage, abilities and strength came from his love for God. His heart for God, persisting even amidst wrongful persecution, eventually gained David Israel’s throne. In some ways David is a picture of Jesus Christ: falsely tried by ancient Israel’s threatened leaders and executed by Rome, the Savior faithfully endured the crucifixion’s horror and dishonor in history’s most awesome, pivotal act of sacrificial love.

## QUESTIONS

Why did God choose David to succeed Saul as Israel’s second king?  
Why did David draw five stones from the stream to battle Goliath?

## PRAYERS FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Pray for good weather throughout the week as kids and volunteers are outdoors. Pray that the weather would be nice for all the different activities, crafts, and story times that would take place outside.

# THURSDAY

## Luke 10:38-42

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I relate to Martha's style—she was hurried in her varied activities, tending to fly around like a trapeze artist or circus acrobat. Martha was often a human *doing* rather than a human *being*. Her sister Mary, conversely, was content to spend time with the Lord, simply to be with Him. In her busyness, Martha even criticized her sister for not helping out, for leaving her with the work of preparation.

In response to Martha's appeal to get Mary more involved in the work, Jesus reminded Martha that time with Him is precious, better than anything else. This is an incredible lesson for we who are "Type A's"—tending to be rushed, often overbooked, hyper-focused on deadlines and "things needing to get done." Sister Mary had "*chosen what is better*" (Luke 10:42).

I can find myself caught up in Christian pursuits—even good things—that might rob me of joy and make my prayers and Bible study more mechanical than revitalizing. Many of Israel's 1st century religious leaders had similar issues, focused on empty ritual and rules-following instead of God's best. God created us to be in loving relationship—such closeness to the Creator should be joyful, not oppressive. Jesus' tough love toward the Pharisees aimed to move them off of their taxing, legalistic courses. The Messiah promised accordingly: "*My yoke is easy, and My burden is light*" (Matthew 11:30).



It is easy to get tangled up in our busyness, sometimes even neglecting the very Lord we love, the One we aim to follow and serve. I remind myself constantly, “More Mary, less Martha!” There is a time and place for getting things done; however, nothing surpasses spending time with the Savior, drawing closer to Him and learning more about God’s ways.

Jesus wants us to be at peace, to enjoy the hope which He alone provides. All we need to do to be at peace is stop and pray, asking that His peace would wash over us. Do you know “*the Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6)? Have you asked Him for “*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding*” (Philippians 4:7)?

## QUESTIONS

How did Mary spend her time around Jesus more wisely than her sister, Martha? How was Martha a bit like the ancient Pharisees and, perhaps, like you and me at times

## PRAYERS FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Pray that the leaders would be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading throughout the week. That they would be able to care for each of the children’s spiritual needs. Pray that the kids would also be open to the leading of the Spirit as well.

# FRIDAY

## Mark 14:27-72

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The ringmaster runs everything at the circus. As our “Emanuel... God with us” (Matthew 1:23), Jesus could have called attention to Himself or been visibly controlling like a ringmaster. He could have destroyed His adversaries to demonstrate power. However, He came as a Servant, to redeem us by dying as our Substitute and posting bail that no other could pay. Jesus’ power was exhibited in loving submission to the Father—His love, faithfulness and purity were the “weapons” that defeated our enemies: sin, death and Satan himself.

Jesus could have compelled His followers’ obedience. Likewise, God could force us to honor and obey Him; however, that would be unloving—true love cannot be coerced. Jesus knew and foretold that even His closest disciples—all except the Apostle John—would betray Him during His false trial and crucifixion. Simon Peter challenged Him here, vowing “Even if I have to die with You, I will never disown You!” (Mark 14:31) Sadly, Peter fulfilled Jesus’ prophecy just hours later.

Despite knowing that Peter would deny Him, Jesus loved this disciple. In an act of divine forgiveness and grace, after rising from the grave Jesus later lovingly reinstated Peter (John 21). This incident masterfully illustrates the essence of Jesus’ First Coming mission: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us...while we were [His] enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.” (Romans 5:8-10)

Jesus possessed true strength: power under control. Jesus' purity and faithfulness enabled Him to endure false accusations, friends' desertions, misunderstanding within His immediate family, being spat upon, beaten and scourged by executioners, even the excruciating pain and public humiliation of the crucifixion. "God draws near to the brokenhearted. He leans toward those who are suffering. He knows what it feels like to be wounded and abandoned." (John D. Richardson)

It was love that held Jesus to Calvary's cross, not its metal spikes. Have you pondered what the Lord has done to provide for your salvation? Love is when a Man wipes your tears even after you left Him hanging on a cross for your sins. Who could reject such a Savior?

## QUESTIONS

What does *Emmanuel* mean and why did some refer to Jesus with this name? Why doesn't God force us to honor and obey Him? How was Jesus' reinstatement of Simon Peter a picture of His mission in coming to earth.

## PRAYERS FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Pray that as the week finishes that all the kids attending would take hold of what they learned at VBS. Pray that they would not forget the love of God towards them, the kindness of the staff, and the fun they had at church. Pray that the enemy would not snatch away the gospel seed planted during their week at VBS.

## Sources

- John D. Richardson's quote can be found at <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/579050-god-draws-near-to-the-brokenhearted-he-leans-toward-those>

