

Thrive

Thriving in an Uncertain World

Week 1: Adversity

Daniel 1: 1 – 7



1. We all face adversity in life. Jesus told his disciples: *“In this world you will experience difficulties! But take heart! I have conquered the world! I’ve told you this so that in trusting me, you will be unshakable and deeply at peace”* John 16:33 (Mes).

- a. Meditate on the above verse then describe how you might act, think, or feel differently about a challenge you are presently facing that is not yet resolved.
- b. Knowing that problems are inevitable, why do you think we continue to be surprised by the adversity in our lives?

2. We often get stuck asking “Why?” rather than “What?” In the book of Job, we read: *“Consider yourself fortunate when God all-powerful chooses to correct you”* (5:17 CEV). How might we benefit from asking ourselves “What is this problem teaching me?” rather than focusing on the solution?

3. In the prophet Jeremiah, we read: *“The Lord searches our hearts and examines our deepest motives”* (17:10 LB). God may allow adversity to come into our lives to reveal our motives. Why are the motivations for our actions more important than what we actually do with our lives?

4. The ways in which we handle life’s difficulties can reveal important aspects of our character. Give some examples of this.

5. The writer of Proverbs says: *“Sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways”* (20:30 TEV). God sometimes shakes things up in our lives to guide us. What are some painful experiences that might cause people to change their lifestyles, ways of thinking, or behavior?

6. God may allow adversity to come into our life to shelter us: *“How he wanted to lure you away from danger into a wide and pleasant valley and to prosper you there”* Job 36:16 (LB). What roadblocks may prevent us from responding to God’s protection when disappointments and regrets arise in our lives?

7. Share an undesirable situation such as unemployment, ending a relationship, or a health concern that led you to something better.

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Week 2: Belittled

Daniel 1: 8 – 21; 2

Intro

What is your favorite food item in your typical Thanksgiving meal?

Part A

How did you do with your faith during high school and college? What would you do differently if you could repeat that experience with what you know now?

Exercise

How can we support our students in school and college? How can we encourage them to stand firm?

(Perhaps as a group you would like to do something that would support some students that your group knows)

Part B

Briefly share a time when you stood up for something you believed in. Describe how you felt when you took your stand.

2. Most people don't care what you believe. But there are a vocal few who will belittle your faith. Discuss when this last happened to you. What was the conversation about and how did you defend your faith in God?

3. Daniel gives us an example of someone who was indoctrinated against God's teaching for three years, yet grew in God's wisdom and understanding so his advice was far better than all the king's other advisors (see chapter 1). How do you think Daniel was able to keep his convictions in the midst of teaching that was contrary to what he believed?

Part C

On Sunday Pastor Kevin talked about cultivating our eyes to see God's regular activity in our lives and world. He encouraged us to go on a God-Hunt.

Below are the 4 categories he identified:

Evidence of God's care

Unusual linkage of events

Answer to prayer

A meaningful word

When you think through chapter 1 & 2 of Daniel. Give an example of how Daniel witnessed God's activity in these 4 areas.

Reflect on your own experience. Give an example from your life of one of these signs of God's activity.

Part D

Prayer

Pray for our students

Pray for us to see God's activity and for boldness to share it

Pray that as individuals, students, and as a church that we don't just survive but thrive during this time.

Needs?

5. Psalm 119:104 (NLT): "Your commandments give me great understanding. It's no wonder I can see and hate every false way of life." Reflect on a time you encountered the living Christ through the Scriptures. If you remember, share what you were reading at the time. How does Scripture help you know (not intellectually, but in your heart) about Jesus or about yourself? Discuss how meditating on the Bible's truth could positively change your life and/or how you relate to others.

8. In Proverbs 19:8, God's promises success for those who get wisdom and love learning. No matter our age, we can continue to learn. But it comes with a cost - our time. Examine how you spend your time. What changes can you make to grow in wisdom and understanding?

9. Describe how believing friends and regularly gathering for worship with fellow believers can strengthen your faith and confirm your convictions. How does a small group help members hold firm in love, compassion, joy and commitment to the ways of Jesus? Encourage one another by explaining how others have filled you with hope during difficult times.

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Week 3: Divine Intervention

Daniel 2: 29- 49

Tonight we listened to a portion of a radio interview conducted by Jim Lyon, General Director of the Church of God headquartered in Anderson with our own Jeremy Patzer on "Governing as a Person of Faith." The interview was done on a program called "Viewpoint" that is heard on radio around the US. This is 1 of 3 interviews done with Jeremy. You can find all the interviews on

<https://www.cbhviewpoint.org/> or Facebook : christiansbroadcastinghope/

Part A: Spiritual & Earthly Kingdoms

1. How interested are you personally in politics (civic, provincial, federal) ? What has contributed to your present level of interest?
2. What do you perceive as some of the common challenges and pressures faced by a person of faith in the political arena? How can we support our 'Daniel's' (those who enter the political arena)
3. Pastor Kevin talked about Nebuchednezzar's dream in Daniel 2 29 – 49. In the dream we see the description of earthly kingdoms and the kingdom of God. How do you think being a citizen of the Kingdom of God affects our citizenry in the earthly kingdom? What does it call us to? What does it assure us of? (read 1 Peter 2: 9 – 17)
4. What do we learn from Daniel (and the interview) about how we as Christians can prepare and speak effectively to power about issues that concern them?
5. Below is a chart of the many different perspectives on church and Covid-19 pandemic. What fear/desire/ perspective lie behind each perspective? How as citizens of the Kingdom of God can we navigate through these differences and maintain unity? What is required of each of us?

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Week 4: Heat

Daniel 3: 1 – 30

⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. ¹⁷If 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. ¹⁸But 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."

1. What strikes you about the character and faith of these young men? Of the people in the podcast?
2. These young men felt intense pressure to conform, to compromise. Where do we feel that pressure today in our society? How do you decide which hills to die on? Where is the line for you? How can we encourage other believers who are being tested? Is there a Bible verse that offers you help and direction?
3. Often we believe God will protect us from the fiery furnace. We wrestle with disappointment with God when he doesn't. What do these young men teach us about suffering and faith?
4. Can you describe a time when you wrestled with disappointment with God. What got you through? How would you counsel someone whose faith is wavering because of disappointment with God?
5. "I have refined you but not in the way silver is refined. Rather, I have refined you in the furnace of suffering." Isaiah 48:10 (NLT)
What lessons can we learn in the furnaces of life? (v. 28,29) What perspectives do we need to be "learners" in those times?
6. Sometimes God protects us from the fiery furnaces, sometimes he enters into them with us. Share an occasion when "God showed up for you" in a time of hardship and testing.
7. "But each of you must be careful how you build [your lives]. For God has already placed Jesus Christ as the one and only foundation... And the quality of each person's work will be seen when the Day of Christ exposes it. For on that Day fire will reveal everyone's work.... If what was built on the foundation survives the fire, the builder will receive a reward. But if your work is burnt up, then you will lose it; but you yourself will be saved, as if you had escaped through the fire." 1 Corinthians 3:10b-15 (GN)
What steps can we take to build a life on a foundation that can be tested by fire?

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Week 5: Success

Daniel 4

Part A

1. Pete Briscoe says "Elections are won and lost when God casts his vote." How is that true? How do we reconcile with the reality that sometimes there are some pretty ungodly people who are in power? How do we reconcile that with our responsibility in democracy to engage and vote?
2. If Pete's statement is true how does that effect us ?
3. What does it take for the church to be a "branch for weary birds"? What is your story in that regard?

Part B.

Proverbs 16: 18 says "Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall."

1. Would you be willing to share a time in your life where you got a little too big for your britches" and what happened to humble you? Or Who have you encountered in your life that displayed humility? How did it express itself in that person?
2. How do you define pride? Humility?
3. What are some of the secret faces of pride? What helps you to recognize the face of pride – in yourself? In others?
4. What attitudes, perspectives, actions do you employ to guard against pride? (note ones listed in v. 27, 34)How do those serve as antidotes to pride?
5. Pastor Kevin mentioned on Sunday that Nebuchadnezzar's story is a gospel story. It is every person's story. What amazes you about God's grace? How does your story parallel Nebuchadnezzar's? (i.e. What did it take for God to reach you – whisper of conviction, messenger, pain? What has Christ restored or changed in your life?)

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Week 6: Listen

Daniel 5

1. React to this statement: "God is like a radio station constantly broadcasting his divine character and plan (Psalm 19:1,2; Romans 1:19,20) This issue is not that God isn't speaking, it is that too often we are not tuned into the station."
What are some of the things that affect our tuning in? What helps you tune in?
2. God speaks to people in a multitude of ways – visions, dreams, messengers/prophets, His Word, audible voice, promptings/nudges, circumstances. What other ways can you add to that list? Can you tell a story from your own life, or that you have heard about how God spoke in one of these ways?
3. What are the most common ways that God speaks to you? What are some of the things God speaks to us about? (i.e. John 16:8, Acts 16: 6 – 10) How have you experienced God's speaking to you?
4. Mediums, horoscopes, palm readers, psychics have become prevalent in our society. What motivates people to seek direction in these ways? Why do you think God tells his people to steer clear of them? (see Lev. 19:31, Isaiah 8:19) What do we have as Christians that makes these things so unnecessary?
5. Today there are people/groups/cults who believe God gives new revelation that supersedes the old. What is the danger of that? How do you answer someone who claims a new "revelation" or "God spoke to me..." ? How does Hebrews 1:1- 3 speak to that?
In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. ³The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.
6. "Revelation" is where God reveals something new or more about his character and plan. "Illumination" is where God brings fresh and/or specific understanding to His Word for our specific situation. Daniel "illuminated" the meaning of dreams/writing on wall that God gave. Tell of an experience when God illuminated his Word to you?
7. Pastor Kevin tells the story of a harbor with 3 lights. When all the lights align you are on the right track and can enter the harbor safely. What "lights" can we use to distinguish God's voice? (John 10:27) Why is alignment important?

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Week 7: Faith

Daniel 6: 1 - 28

Pastor Kevin talked about "Go To" moments. Experiences that have happened in the past that bolster our faith in the present. He described 4 categories:

- The Gospel Story
- Biblical Stories
- Past Personal Experiences
- Others Experiences

In Lamentations 3:19 – 21 we read:

I remember my affliction and my wandering,
the bitterness and the gall.

²⁰ I will remember them,
and my soul is downcast within me.

²¹ **Yet this I call to mind
and therefore I have hope:**

What do you draw from your Gospel story? What biblical story do you lean heavily into when facing "lion's dens"? What past experience bolsters you when the clouds form? What strength do you gain from others stories of God's help and faithfulness?

Take some time tonight sharing with each other the things *you call to mind that give you hope, courage, faith, encouragement, assurance?*

Prayer Time

Thank God for his faithfulness, His Word, for the experiences you have heard tonight