

“Daniel: Living in Babylon” series

Week 3: Responding to difficult situations

March 22, 2026

Daniel 2:1 In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. 2 So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, 3 he said to them, “I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means.” 4 Then the astrologers answered the king, “May the king live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will interpret it.” 5 The king replied to the astrologers, “This is what I have firmly decided: If you do not tell me what my dream was and interpret it, I will have you cut into pieces and your houses turned into piles of rubble. 6 But if you tell me the dream and explain it, you will receive from me gifts and rewards and great honor. So tell me the dream and interpret it for me.”

Introduction

- I want you to think back to the last crisis you faced.
- Perhaps it was that your husband took the last brownie and then when you needed it, there wasn't one. Which led to a fight.
- Maybe it was when your team, that was supposed to win, lost in the semifinals.
- Or maybe it was when your girlfriend or boyfriend told you it was over.
- Or maybe it was when the bill that came was more than you had in the account to pay.
- Or it could be when you went to the doctor and heard that bad news about you or someone you loved.
- Crisis can be major earth shaking moments or they could be smaller, almost “mini crisis” in your week to week living.
- Put yourself in that spot. How were you feeling? Angry? Numb? Depressed?
- How did you respond? What did you do? What did you say? In the moment? In the days that followed?
- What did your response say about you?
- Or perhaps let's ask a different question. The people around you that watched you in your crisis, whether it was your spouse, kids, parents, friends, if I went and talked to them, what would they say that crisis revealed about you?

- We are in a teaching series based on the book of Daniel. We are calling it “Living in Babylon.”
- It is an account of how Daniel and some friends lived for God and made a difference in their world while living in a country that had a value system and moral center that was not only different from theirs, but in many ways, completely contrary.
- It is a powerful story and for followers of Jesus, it is a picture of what is true today in many ways, that we are living in a Babylon, a culture that can be hostile to us, that does not share our values, and does not acknowledge Jesus as king.
- One of things we know about life is that there will be difficult times in our lives. In our world.
- The world around us is not as God designed it to be. Sin has broken and marred it. And so throughout our lives, we will have troubles, big and small.
- When we are living in Babylon, it takes on a whole new level of significance for us.
- What we have seen so far is that even when it feels like you are out of place, that you don't want to have anything to do with the world around you, you are exactly where God wants you. He put you here. You have a role unique to you. God invite you to engage with the world around us to fulfill what he wants to do through you.

- We also saw that as we do this, in order to make a difference in the situation where God has put us, we need to be different. Not weird different, but with different values, different beliefs, living life like the reputation of Jesus is the most important thing.
- What we're going to see today in Daniel, is the reminder that God is in ultimate control of our present and our future, and that this should shape how we respond to life, particularly when faced with crisis.
- **How we face difficult situations witnesses to the reality of God in our lives.**

Main Sermon Text

- In the bible stories I heard as a child, we usually skipped from Daniel 1 (refusing to eat the king's food) to chapter 3 (the fiery furnace).
- But skipping it would be a mistake because it has some great stuff in it. Now, chapter 2 is rather lengthy and is like a play in three acts.
- Act 1 – "The crisis"
- In it we see a crisis involve that directly impacts Daniel and his three friends. And not a casual crisis, but literally a life and death crisis.
- Act 2 – "The response"
- We see what Daniel does when faced with this crisis, this impending catastrophe. More than this, we see how God responds in this crisis.
- Act 3 – "The result"
- This is the resolution of the crisis. What happens? Let's look at each in turn.

- Act 1 – "The crisis"
- It begins with a dream.

1 In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; his mind was troubled and he could not sleep. 2 So the king summoned the magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers to tell him what he had dreamed. When they came in and stood before the king, 3 he said to them, "I have had a dream that troubles me and I want to know what it means."

- This in itself is not unusual. Kings and leaders had schools of people to help them interpret dreams and omens. In fact, the label of these people here probably has some different connotations that they meant. These were men in the kingdom are schooled in interpretation of dreams and signs and omens. They were the political consultants, trend spotters, the religious gurus of the day. It was a combination of the practical and the supernatural.
- This dream so upset Nebuchadnezzar that he needed an interpretation. It had totally shaken him.
- He understood that a lot of times, dream interpretation was just things that got made up on the spot – he didn't trust it. So this time, he told them that they had to tell him his dream first, and then interpret it. By telling him the dream, it would validate that indeed there was a supernatural element to the interpretation.
- They thought the king was crazy. We didn't hear you right. Tell us, we'll tell you. But the king wouldn't budge. In fact, he was so adamant, that he basically gave two options. Do this, and be rewarded but if you can't, I'm going to kill all of you.

10 The astrologers answered the king, "There is no one on earth who can do what the king asks! No king, however great and mighty, has ever asked such a thing of any magician or enchanter or astrologer. 11 What the king asks is too difficult. No one can reveal it to the king except the gods, and they do not live among humans."

- So the king ordered their deaths and the deaths of anyone in that profession, which included Daniel and his three friends.

13 So the decree was issued to put the wise men to death, and men were sent to look for Daniel and his friends to put them to death.

- There were actually two crisis here – and one caused the other. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream which caused him to have a crisis of belief or confidence or control which then led to the death edict which led to everyone else's crisis.

I. Difficult situations are an opportunity to bring glory to God.

- What is your response to difficult situations? To crisis? To conflict?
- Do we respond with worry and fear?
- Do we overwork? Obsess? Do we plan our way out of it? Logic our way through it?
- Stick our heads in the sand and ignore it hoping it will get better or go away?
- Do we get angry? Do we trust? Can we relax in it with grace? Do we isolate?
- It is helpful to remember two things:
- You will face difficult situations. Crisis. Problems. Jesus even said:

John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble."

- Thankfully, Jesus continued this statement and we'll come back to it later, but for now, consider that this is just a generally true statement. No one escapes unscathed from this life, even if we are positioned in the best possible circumstances. When this happens, whether it is from a world that is just broken OR if it comes from actions from people or a world that opposes us, it should not surprise us. This can be really helpful.
- But the second truth is equally helpful.
- Difficult situations are opportunities in disguise.
- Every crisis situation, small or large, is an opportunity for something good. They are chances to glorify Jesus. Remember, if his name and reputation are our primary concern, no where is there a better chance to make this happen than when things are difficult.
- It is easy to see situations like this as obstacles, problems – and they are – but when we recognize them also as opportunities, it will change our actions and our attitudes.
- Let's move on to Act 2 and see how Daniel responded.

- The king turned to conventional wisdom to solve his crisis. He went to the people that were supposed to have answers. The smart people. He wanted to understand and make decisions and tried to get wisdom from the world in order to do so.
- The wise men of the kingdom basically threw up their hands. They gave up. They recognized that what was being asked was impossible and they had no solution.
- What we are interested in is Daniel's response. He wasn't even part of the group that the king had gone to. He had almost certainly gone to the older more experienced people. But since they failed, he is now going to kill them all, including Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego who were barely, if even, out of training.
- Daniel did three things.
- First, he responded with grace.

14 When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact.

- He didn't explode. He didn't panic. He didn't get angry. His life was in danger. I'm not sure I would have been so gracious.
- I wonder if this is how we respond when faced with the unexpected, the crisis, in our lives?
- Second, he went to his small group.

17 Then Daniel returned to his house and explained the matter to his friends Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

- Daniel immediately went to people who shared his value system, beliefs and laid it all out for them.
- This might seem small, but many of us when faced with a crisis, turn inwards.
- We are perfectly content to help others, but when we have a problem, we stew. We keep it inside. We don't share what's really going on. Daniel immediately sought the help of his friends. And this isn't just any friends. Friends who were on the same page with their beliefs and values.
- Third, and most importantly, they sought God.
18 He urged them to plead for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery, so that he and his friends might not be executed with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.
- What did they do? They prayed. They went to God. They asked him to help them.
- Why? Because they knew that the solution to their problem was not in themselves. Only God could do what was needed here. They went to God desperate but with the expectation that God could do what he needed to do.
- Live with an utter reliance on God.
- They knew that prayer was the only answer as they themselves could never answer the king's demand.

II. How we respond in crisis reveals what we believe about God.

- What we fill ourselves with is what spills out in difficult situations.
- And here's the thing, we don't decide what comes up in that moment. It is a result of what has been poured in long before.
- When Daniel responded with grace, went to his friends, and sought God, it's because it's what he made a habit of doing all along.
- How you seek God now will determine how you respond later.
- We can say all we want that we love God, love others, trust him and are committed to him, but when difficulty comes, it will show what is true.

- So what was the result of this? What was God's response?

19 During the night the mystery was revealed to Daniel in a vision. Then Daniel praised the God of heaven 20 and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. 21 He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. 22 He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him. 23 I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king."

- Daniel gets the advisor and lets him know not to kill anyone because he can answer the king's request. He goes to the king with the answer that God gave him.

27 Daniel replied, "No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, 28 but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries. He has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in days to come. Your dream and the visions that passed through your mind as you were lying in bed are these: 29 "As Your Majesty was lying there, your mind turned to things to come, and the revealer of mysteries showed you what is going to happen. 30 As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than anyone else alive, but so that Your Majesty may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind."

- We are not going to spend a lot of time on the content of the vision – you can read the full answer, but essentially, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed about this amazing, huge, statue. It had

a head of gold, arms and chest of silver, belly & thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet mixed of iron and clay.

- This massive stone comes and disintegrates the statue, taking its place and turning into a huge mountain.
- He then proceeded to explain the meaning of the vision, which was God showing the future.
- Head of Gold – Babylon
- Arms and chest of silver – Medo-Persian empire
- Belly & Thighs of bronze – Greek empire
- Legs of Iron – Roman empire
- Feet mixed – the fragmented Roman empire up until today
- The rock – the full kingdom of God
- Why did God give this vision to Nebuchadnezzar and the interpretation to Daniel?
- God wanted this world leader to know that God both controls history and reveals it.
- The image represented human power and empire. The image seems invincible, but it was actually unstable at its base. Therefore one blow to the foundation could topple the whole thing.
- It's also significant to see that the image described devolution, not evolution. Instead of man beginning in the dust and evolving into gold, this vision declares that man's dominion begins with gold and devalues into dust.
- What does this mean for us? Now?

III. God is a God of revelation

- God initiated this whole encounter. He sent the dream. He sent the interpretation. He used it to change the people involved.
- My friends, God desires to bring revelation to us.
- What does that mean? He is not necessarily giving us views to the future, predictions of future kingdoms, but God always wants to reveal himself to us.
- All of Scripture points to Jesus, which was God's ultimate way of revealing himself.
John 1:14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- Over and over we are told that God is revealing himself to us. He wants us to know more about him. He wants us to know him in more intimate ways. He wants us to understand our world better. He wants us to have wisdom in how to live. He desires for us to know ourselves – our motivations, our sins, our strengths, our hangups, our victories.
- He reveals himself so we know him, we know ourselves in line with him, and our life and actions are impacted as a result.
- God is not hiding himself – he is a God of revelation.
- He wants to reveal himself to you. To have you encounter him. To show you things about yourself that solidify your identity in him. He wants you to understand what needs to change in your life so you can be more of who you created to be, with joy and hope and peace.
- But what Daniel reminds us of is this:
- Revelation only comes when we hang with him. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego immersed themselves in God. His words. His laws. His character. If we are not spending time with God, we cannot expect to see or hear any revelation.
- Revelation only comes with practice.
- Learn to listen. To be still. To read Scripture. To pray. To spend time with him. To act on what he says.

Conclusion

- God knows and controls both our present and our future.
- His desire is for us to know him in such a way that in difficult situations, we reflect the name, reputation and character of the God we claim to serve.
- Remember, even in difficult times, what we said last week is still true – we are right where we are supposed to be.
- How we face difficult situations witnesses to the reality of God in our lives.
- It will be noticeable. It will set us apart. God will use it to change us and influence others.
- Not only did the answer to the dream grow the faith of Daniel and his friends, it influenced the king.

46 Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell prostrate before Daniel and paid him honor and ordered that an offering and incense be presented to him. 47 The king said to Daniel, "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery."

- Doesn't mean he had "converted" – as we will see next week, but it put Yahweh squarely on his radar, which influenced him in the future. He recognized the power of Daniel's God. He admitted something about God. But it is even better than this.
- God used this to set Daniel up for further influence.

48 Then the king placed Daniel in a high position and lavished many gifts on him. He made him ruler over the entire province of Babylon and placed him in charge of all its wise men. 49 Moreover, at Daniel's request the king appointed Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego administrators over the province of Babylon, while Daniel himself remained at the royal court.

- How we face difficult situations witnesses to the reality of God in our lives.
- When we are filled with the Spirit, we will respond differently, and God will use this, as totally different people, right where we live, where he wants us, in Babylon.