

Daniel: Living by Faith in the World of the Lions

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[0 : 00] You know, when we prayed about starting the church, we prayed that Watermark would be a church where people could be real. We realized that in Hong Kong especially, but in most places, people have a fear of being honest with what's going on inside of them.

We wanted a church. We prayed for a church. We trusted the Lord for a church where people could be known. It's one of the reasons you have a name tag on.

The other reason is I have a terrible memory. So it helps me to know your name when we look at everybody. But we wanted to know and have a church where people could know your name, where everyone would know you, where everybody would know a part of your story.

They would know what's going on, and they could be praying for you and be a part of those things. And we realized that so often it's easy to wear a mask and not be known and not be real and not be authentic.

And it's one of the things that we prize the most in the church is this authenticity and realism. We also kind of prize rawness and things like that. But we prayed that Watermark would be a place where you would feel safe, that you would know that it's okay to be broken, that you'd be okay to share those things, that you would know that even as the pastor shares stories about themselves sometimes because that's the only stories we know, and they're the ones that God used in our lives, that it doesn't mean that we're not broken.

[1 : 23] And it probably means that we're the most broken people here, and that's what you need to know, right? So it was 1982. I was in college, so I don't want to hear who was born at that time.

So I'm not going to ask you to stand up if you're alive in 1982. And I went to university for two main reasons. One reason is I really wanted to be a trauma doctor. I love medicine.

I still love medicine. I worked in an ER for a couple years, and I wanted to be a trauma doctor and fight death. I also went to the university because I wanted to date cute girls.

Now, my university, I think, has the most beautiful girls in the Southeast Conference and in probably America. They're all Southern Bells, and just they're really amazing.

Not as good as my wife, but they're pretty hot. And my wife is hot, too. So I think my wife is hot, so you can just know that. Anyway, but I mostly went to school because I wanted to be a doctor.

[2 : 25] And I'll never forget the day I was in my organic chemistry class, and we were studying the atomic element table. And we got to atomic element number three.

Now, if you know what atomic element number three is, you are a nerd, just like I am. So don't wiki it up. But it's the element lithium. And the teacher started talking about it, and he said that's from lithos, which is Greek for stone or rock.

And it derives a word called lithostratos. Does anybody know what lithostratos is? And no one knew because it's a biblical term. It's only used once in the Bible, and it was actually the place where Pilate stood when he pronounced judgment on Christ.

In Hebrew, it's called gabatha. But in Greek, it's lithostratos. And no one knew that. And then he started talking. He says, are there any Christians in here?

And I thought, well, this sounds like it's a pretty interesting thing. He brings up lithostratos and Christ. And, you know, but I raised my hand. There's about 45 of us. We were pre-med students and some nurses. And I raised my hand, and a little girl raised her hand.

[3 : 29] And so two of us raised our hands. And he didn't pick on the little girl, but he picked on me. And he asked me to stand up. And in the middle of the class of all these students who were my peers that we were going to go through the next couple of years and be doctors together and nurses that were going to work with us, he just ripped into me like out of control.

I mean, how can you be so stupid? How can you be so dumb? This is a place of higher education and learning. How can you believe in God? God, you have to be one of the most foolish people I ever know. And I'm just sitting there, and it seems like it's like 30 minutes, right? It's like, I'm like, oh, my gosh. It was probably only like two minutes. But I just got ripped up and down. And I'm sure I was walking funny because my butt just got chewed off. And it was just, it was, I don't know if I can say butt in church, but I just did.

But I was hurting, and I almost wanted to throw up. And at the end of the time, he looked at me, and he said, you know, I can guarantee you that there's no way you're going to get into medical school if you keep this worldview.

I will make it my mission in life to make sure you don't get to medical school. And he could do that because he was actually on the board for my school who pre-interviewed the medical school students. So his recommendation meant a lot.

[4 : 39] And I walked away, and I felt like my whole world was just kind of crumbling, right? I was just falling apart. And I felt like that scene in Top Gun when Goose and Maverick make a dumb mistake in their airplane, and they're about to get fired, you know, kicked out of the Navy.

And Goose is sitting there going, okay, what's the name of that truck driving school? What's the address for that? I need to call them up because I need to be a truck driver. I felt like that. I felt like, okay, I need to probably look for another job because there's no way I'm going to be a doctor ever. And I went home, and I had two roommates who were Christians, and they were so blunt, which you kind of like. And they weren't even Australian. They were Americans, and they were blunt, which are South Africans, right?

So that's one of the things I love about South Africans and Australians. They're blunt, and that's why two of them are elders. And I started sharing these things, and Uncle, we call him Uncle Milton. Milton looked at me, and he goes, does that surprise you?

And I said, yeah, it does. Makes me angry. And he goes, why? And I thought about it for a second, and I said, well, you know, because I've been walking with the Lord all this time.

[5 : 40] I've been walking with God all this time, and I cannot believe God would do something like that to me. Surely God would look after me. And the moment I said that, it's like a ton of bricks hit me.

And I realized that at that moment in my life, I was a Christian. I was living for God, not because God was beautiful, not because he was amazing, not because of the cross, not because of all the things he's done for me, but I was living for God because of the things he would do for me or that I wanted him to do.

I was actually using God like Santa Claus. And that was one of these aha moments for me, and I realized, what am I going to do with my faith?

And is my faith a real faith, or is my faith a convenient faith? Now, I've had a lot of experiences like that since then, because I am a slow learner. You can ask my wife and my kids.

But God continually brings me back to that idea of, why am I walking with the Lord, and why am I serving him? Is it because I can get things out of him and from him, or is it because he's amazing and awesome, and he's done everything for us, and he deserves our praise?

[6 : 52] Even if he gives us nothing, he deserves everything, because he's already given us eternity. I've gone back to this book of Daniel several times. It's really helped me in that process.

It's given me comfort over the years as I've thought about that and prayed about that and looked about, what does it mean for me to walk with the Lord in this world that is full of lion's den and pits and fires?

The passage that we read today, Daniel 6, takes place 70 years after Daniel 1. So Daniel 1, what happens is that the people of God have just disobeyed God, and they've turned their back on God, and God has basically said, okay.

And so he allows this amazing, huge, ruthless kingdom called Babylon to come in. This king called Nebuchadnezzar, and he comes in, and he basically wipes out Israel, and he destroys the temple partially, and he loots the temple, and he takes all the contents of the temple of God out, and then he takes some of the most important people within society, the educated, the movers and the shakers, and he transports them, especially the young ones, back to Babylon for re-education.

And if you were a Jew at that time, you would almost think that your life was over because the temple was your symbol of God and that God was working and that God was powerful and that he was in control, and all of a sudden that symbol was destroyed, and people who were in Babylon

would mock you because they would say, well, surely your God must not be that powerful because our God crushed your God, and now you're here as our captives.

[8 : 22] And these four boys come back, and one of them's name is Daniel, and the other one's name is Hananiah, and Mishael, and Azariah. They're given different names, Meshach, Abednego, and Shadrach, and they're brought to this foreign kingdom, and they're raised in the foreign ways.

And what you see in Daniel 1 is immediately, these guys, they're probably about 13 years old, they're given a choice, and their choice is, are they going to assimilate to the culture around them? Are they going to be like the culture around them?

Or are they going to choose to honor the Lord? Are they going to walk with God? Are they going to make choices that bring glory to the Lord? And they do it incredibly wisely. When we get to Daniel 6, Daniel is probably 85 years old now.

So it's amazing, because you think Daniel is just, he's really going fast, and it's all, but you know, the time between Daniel 1 and Daniel 6 is 70 years. And we know very little about his life.

He just woke up, and he went to work, and he was faithful, and he prayed, and he went up, and he slept, and he woke up, and he went to work, and he was faithful, and he prayed. And so his life is a lot like most of our lives. It's pretty simple, and mundane, and routine, and he just followed that same routine.

[9 : 22] But in Daniel 6, a new king comes in, the king of the Persians and the Medes. You read about it in chapter 5, and this Darius, at the age of 65, kills the son of Nebuchadnezzar, and he takes over the kingdom, and he's trying to control this massive kingdom.

It's the largest in the world at that time. It encompasses everything. And this new king, Darius, looks at Daniel, and he sees something different in Daniel. He sees this love for the city, because most people, when they're taken captive, don't love the city.

They despise their captors. They despise the city. But Daniel actually loves the city, and he's trying to fix the city, and help the city, and be useful. He sees his character. He sees that he's blameless, and then he has integrity.

They see that he loves the Lord, a God that he thought he had conquered. And so Daniel is just doing some amazing things. And so what I want to look at in this passage, really, just in a short time, are three things that continue to stick out to me, as I struggle with my selfishness, as I struggle with my wanting to use God, instead of worship him.

The things that stick out to me, are just basically the world's view of us, as God's people. And then Daniel's response, to the plot against him. And then God.

[10 : 44] Where's God in all of this? So the world's view of us, Daniel's response to this decree, which is horrific, and just where's God in the process of this? And the first thing that's been sticking out to me over these years, is that when you read Daniel 6, and almost all of the scripture, you realize that the world around us, doesn't understand us at all.

I mean, if you're a Christian in here, and you're trying to talk to your people, in your workplace, as you would to other Christians, and show them the values, and the ideas, and the heart, and the morals, and all the things that are important to us, as Christians, they're going to look at you, like you're an idiot.

They're not going to understand, those things at all. They're going to be, looking at you like you're a crazy person. And if you're a Christian, if you're not a Christian in here, you're here, and we're really glad you're here, and you're just kind of watching Christians, and see what we're all about, you probably think that we're idiots.

And you probably think that we're foolish. I mean, we're here on Sunday, this great day, and we could be out playing rugby, or doing something else on our one day off, but we're here in this community, and so you're probably trying to figure out, what's going on.

And the Bible, and the passage says, that when people look at us, it drives them crazy. It drives them crazy, they don't understand it, or it makes them pity us. It makes them feel sorry for Christians.

[12 : 02] Or sometimes, in this passage, what it does is, it makes them want to destroy us. And the passage says, that these 120 other men, look at what's going on, and they know that this promotion is coming, and they don't like Daniel.

And they know that if Daniel is promoted, the end of their life, the end of their livelihood, the end of the money they make, all the things they do is going to stop, because this guy is different, and he's

so different, they don't understand him.

So they went on a search, to see if they could find anything against him. Have you ever thought about that? There's 120 men, overturning every stone, in his life.

And what would that look like, in your life? If 120 people went after you, and they turned over every stone, because they want to destroy you. I mean, I always think of the presidential elections, you know, when someone wants to become a candidate.

I mean, the first thing that happens, is their family just gets brutalized, right? And their life gets brutalized, and everything they've done, for the last 50 years, gets brutalized. And there's nothing, nowhere you can hide, and so that's kind of where Daniel is at.

[13:05] He's, he's being brutalized, but they come back, and they realize, that they can't find anything on him. That he, he has integrity. Not that he's perfect, and he's not sinless, but he has integrity, and he remains consistent.

And they, they worry about what they're going to do. When I was in China, I got a chance, for 10 years, I was studying up there, for a part of that, and one of the things, I was able to do, is study Chinese philosophy, and philosophers.

And we'd read them in class, and talk about them. And one of the guys, that stuck out to me the most, because I think he is so different, than everybody else, is a guy named Han Fei. And Han Fei, which makes him different, as a philosopher, is this, that almost all the other, Chinese philosophers, would say that man is basically good.

And what we need, is re-education, and we need more teaching, and we need, other things in our life, but we're actually good, we're not bad. But what, what Han Fei said, was that we're actually wicked.

And he's actually the only, Chinese philosopher, I think, who said that man, at his core, is basically evil. He said that man, is basically selfish, that man is basically corrupt. And then what he said next, I've always remembered, and I probably studied it, 20 years ago.

[14:14] He said, if you find a person, who's not corrupt, and if you find a person, you cannot corrupt, you must kill them. Because you cannot control, control a person, who is uncorruptible.

And they're going to always, cause you trouble. And so if you're the leader, Han Fei says, the only way you can deal, with these people, is to kill them. And that's what happens, here in this story.

The people going after Daniel, looking over every lock, the world that's watching his life, look at him and say, well he makes no sense to us at all. So what is the problem? Well the root of the problem, is his faith, his integrity, how he's walking with the Lord.

These things made no sense to him. And they make no sense, to the people around you. I mean my accountant, still does not understand, why I tithe to a church.

He just, every time I put that in there, he goes, there has to be better ways, to use your money. Because it makes no sense, to give money to a church. And some of you have friends, and they look at you, and they go, I don't understand why you're wasting Sunday, in community.

[15:21] And I have friends, who look at me, and they say, I'm foolish, for still being in Asia. And why didn't I go back, to be a doctor? And why did I give all that up? And this lifestyle, that God has called us to, this lifestyle to be different, looks incredibly strange.

And the passage reminds us, it reminds me, as a Christ follower, that if I am a Christ follower, I should be thinking differently. That my values should be different, that my focus should be different, that my priorities should be different, that my passions should be different, that my goals should be different, from the people around me, who don't know Christ.

I mean, my goals, my focus now, is eternal. And I'm not so worried, about what's happening here and now, but my worry is, that I honor the Lord, and that when I stand before him, in eternity, he looks at me and says, well done my good and faithful servant.

And when you live this way, in your workplace, or in your home, or in your schools, people are going to look at you, and say, that is the dumbest thing.

I've ever heard. They're going to have, a really hard time with that. Sometimes I forget that. Don't you forget that. I put the other bulletin passages, in the bulletin, about Jesus, and Jesus said specifically, if you come into the faith, he's taking you out of the world.

[16:52] And because you're out of the world now, the world is going to look at you, and they're going to look at all your priorities, your values, everything that you do, and they're going to say, that's stupid. And that's strange. And you're going to be living for eternity, and there's always going to be a misunderstanding with that.

And Daniel passage in the rest of the Bible says that you and I are going to live with these tensions always. We're going to live with eternal tensions, with temporal tensions. And as we try to live out our life, people around us are going to think we are stupid.

And I just want to tell you one thing, guys. It's okay to be stupid for God. If you're obeying the Lord, it's okay to be stupid. Because you have a different focus, you have different priorities.

And if you don't look stupid, it might mean that we're not living the way that God wants us to live.

The next thing that sticks out in this passage, and I continue to be drawn towards, is just Daniel's response.

You look at it in verse 10. Daniel knew what was going to happen. He knew that people were going against him. He knew the decree had been signed. He knew the consequences of breaking the law.

[17:59] He probably was smart enough to know what had happened after hearing all these things. And he had a choice. And his choice is a choice that I continually have and that we continually have.

And his choice is this. Does he change? Does he change his character in the workplace when people are getting bashed and he doesn't want to get bashed?

Does he change his habits when everybody else thinks taking a break is foolish or doing something different without being on your BlackBerry makes no sense?

Does he change his lifestyle? Does he change his relationship with God? When you think about it, so he's been there for 70 years. So what we're told is 70 years times 365 days, times three times a day, that's 76,650 times that he has met with the Lord in his captivity that we know of.

Now he's only asked to stop praying for 30 days. So that's only 90 times. So 90 times against 76,650 times isn't a lot. And he knows that people are watching him and he could stop.

[19:09] He could change how he prays, you know? Sometimes I'm so self-conscious, I don't do this by saying, dear Lord, thank you for this day. Everything is great. People are watching me. I don't want to look like an idiot.

We love you. We need you. Amen. I mean, he could do that, right? He could find a different place to pray. He could find a more private place to pray. I mean, if I were Daniel and I've been thinking about this all my life, I would think, you know, I would have either gone to the king to complain or I would have rationalized to myself.

I would have said something like this. God, I know there's no way you would have put me in this position of power and influence and authority to throw it all away.

There's no way you would do that. There's no way you would ask me to throw all these things away.

So there has to be something else that I could do. Have you ever said that? God, I know you've given me all these things and these things are happening and for me to make this change, I know I might lose everything.

No way you want me to lose everything. For the gospel? No way. That's stupid. That's foolish. It's illogical. It's because people will look at me and say, that's so dumb.

[20:21] But that might happen. And when you look at Daniel's life, he doesn't do any of those things. He just, in verse 10, he just obeys. He just goes and he prays.

He just goes and trusts the Lord. The Hebrew and the Aramaic that he's writing, and it just says that he just did what he always did. So for 70 years, he was walking with the Lord and he just did what he had always done.

So my question to us is, what would we have done? If you were in Daniel and you had a chance to lose it all, what would you have done? We're told that he did it because he trusts in the Lord.

Maybe a better question to ask is, who do we trust in? Or what do we trust in? I think, for me, the way I answer this, and maybe you can answer it differently, but the way you should probably answer it is look at your habits.

Look at the things you do all the time. Look at the things you don't neglect. Look at the things that you're faithful to. Those are probably things that you trust in. And if those things don't include time with the Lord, or praying, or reading His Word, and if you're a Christian, Daniel probably wouldn't understand that at all.

[21:48] Because for him, he knew that his need for God was so massive that he went before the Lord three times. I need to digress, but he's the CEO of the large, well, he's probably the second in charge of the largest country in the world.

I mean, he was probably really, really busy, don't you think? I mean, he was probably really busy. But he spent three times a day praying.

I mean, sometimes I'm so busy, I don't even spend three minutes praying. And if I don't do it at the beginning of the day, I just, I get caught up in everything else. And I just, and I do all these important things.

And I do them, and I just forget. But Daniel's response is his passion and the thing that's most important to him, and it's his relationship with God.

And he doesn't compromise. He just goes ahead, and he does what God has called him to do. And he just does it. And he knows what's gonna happen, and he just does it. And the last thing this passage reminds me of, and it's throughout all of Scripture, and we've been talking about it since we started as a church, and we've been talking about it in the last series we did, God's Story, Our Story, is that this passage in all of Scripture talks about this idea that God is in control of all things. [23 : 03] Did you know that? Did you know that if you're a child of God, and even if you are not, that God is sovereignly in control of everything? I mean, he's the creator.

He controls all things. You look at verse 16. King Darius knew that. King Darius was the most powerful man in the kingdom.

And he tried everything. He exerted himself. It says in the Hebrew, when he found out what had happened, in verse 14, the distress, it means that he threw up. He was so deeply distressed that his stomach got sick because he knew what had happened.

He knew he had been tricked, and he knew that he was about to lose his greatest asset. And so in verse 14, it says that he spent all day trying to exert himself, everything possible, to rescue Daniel. And at the end of that, he looks at it, and he says, I just can't do anything. But he knew somebody who could. And so in verse 16, he says, your God, whom you constantly serve, he'll deliver you.

[24 : 06] Now think about it. He's the most powerful person, but he can do nothing. I mean, Daniel, Daniel knew that God was sovereign, didn't he? I mean, he knew it in his lifestyle. He knew it even with the present circumstances.

He knew it even with the enemies coming after him. He knew it despite the laws of the Medes and Persians. He knew it despite the half king, the king who's half in control. He knew it in spite of the hungry lions growling and jumping, and he had probably seen it before, you know.

The Babylonians, they burned people alive. So you read about that in chapter 3, Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego. But the Medes and Persians, they worshiped fire, so they didn't burn people alive.

They just threw them to the lions. And so I'm sure that Daniel has known this, and he's seen these things, and he knows that God is in control. One thing I want to point out to you, and please, I think, just think about this and underline it, because I struggle with this.

I struggle with this, especially when the lion's dens are huge, and when they're right in front of my face. I struggle with this idea of God being in total control, if I'm honest. I don't know if you struggle with that, but I do.

[25 : 14] But you notice in this passage that God did not keep Daniel from going through the difficult times? Did you notice that?

I mean, we think if God is good, he's not going to give us any difficult times, but the passage in almost all the Bible says that he doesn't work that way. That God allows us to go through the difficult times, but he preserves his people in them.

Did you hear what I said? I said that God allows you to go into the dens, and God allows you to go into the fires, because he knows that in those dens and in those fires, that's the only place you're going to trust him.

He knows in those places where you're out of control and everything's out of control and everybody's against you and you're losing your job and everything's going wrong. He knows that only in those places can you really say, I've been using you instead of trusting you.

And so God takes us into those places because he wants to show us that he's in total control. And he wants to teach you about something about yourself.

[26 : 26] And can I share one other thing that's very personal to me and it's close to my heart, and it's this. Just because you're in a lion's den right now, just because you feel like you're getting burned up or your butt's getting chewed off or something bad's happening in your life, just because those things are happening in your life, it doesn't mean that God is angry with you.

I mean, I grew up in a church and I loved my church. But one of the things I had a hard time with was they told me that whenever something bad happened, it meant that I wasn't good enough. Whenever something bad was going on to me, I needed to pray more, I needed to tithe more, I needed to serve more because God wasn't pleased with me.

But that's not the message of the Bible. And that's not the message of grace. And that's not the message of the gospel. God takes us through these places because he wants to show us something.

One of the things that I've been keen to focus on is that the focus of Daniel isn't just about Daniel, but it's all about God's sovereignty in our life.

And that's what scripture's all about. God is sovereign, and are we gonna trust him, are we gonna allow him to be that? But another thing that Daniel reminds me of, and it points me to, is someone who's gonna come after Daniel. It's Jesus.

[27 : 46] And when you look at their lives, they're very similar. They both came from a land that was far away to a foreign land. They both were treated and mistreated. They both had people that were envious and jealous of them.

They both were falsely accused. And unlike Daniel, who was found blameless, Jesus was not just found blameless, but Jesus was found sinless. He was found perfect.

They both were accused, and the men who were over them tried to free them. Pilate tried to free Christ, and he couldn't do it. Darius tried to free Daniel, and he couldn't do it. They both were thrown into a tomb, and they both had a seal placed over this tomb.

But the difference is, in verse 23, is that Daniel's taken out. And we're told that when Daniel comes out, he doesn't have any marks or scratches on him. He's perfect, just like the boys who went through the fire. You couldn't even smell the fire on their clothes.

And people go, it's a miracle. God's in control. But Jesus wasn't taken out. When he came out of it, he was filled with scars and bruises and holes.

[28 : 49] He died. And what this passage shows me and points me to, and what the rest of the scripture says, is that Christ died. He entered into the biggest lion's den, which is death and sin, and he died, and he defeated it.

And if we forget that on our journey, when we're going into our small lion's dens, we're going to be in trouble. But the message of the scripture is that Christ came, he faced all the things that you and I are going to face, and he went through it successfully.

And because he went through it successfully, you and I now, as his children, have this hope and this assurance that no matter what we go through, no matter how hard it is in your work right now, I don't know what lion's den you're in.

Maybe it is your work. Maybe your boss is a jerk. Your employees are jerks. Your colleagues are jerks. Maybe they're out to kill you. They're out to get you out. They're out to get your job. Maybe the goals are wrong. The quotas are wrong. The finances are wrong.

Maybe that's your lion's den. Maybe your lion's den is your family. There's other believers and non-believers in there, and there's tension, and you feel this loyalty. Do I go and bow down to the shrine in the house, and do I go sweep the tombs, and how do I show honor to my parents who want nothing to do with God, and every time I get together on Sunday after lunch for family times or the gatherings, it's not a fun time because all I do is I feel bad about the choices I've made, and they look at my siblings and say, why can't you be more like them and honor your parents more?

[30 : 16] Maybe that is your lion's den, or maybe your lion's den is school, and you have professors like I had who hated Christ. You know that guy?

My first semester at Auburn. Five A's and an F. Organic chemistry. Failed me. I never saw my grades.

I never saw my papers, and he made it his job to destroy me for the next four years. The amazing thing is that almost that exact same week, another teacher did almost the exact same thing, and I dumbly did the exact same thing, and he went after me, but then afterwards he came up and he said to me, I'm a Christian too, and I wanted to see how you would react, and I wanted to see if you were truly a follower of Christ or if you just followed Christ because of the things he would give you. I don't know what's happening in your school. Maybe it's people who are trying to get ahead and they're cheating. Maybe that's the lion's den. I don't know, but the passage says, and the scripture says, that no matter what you're facing today, no matter how hard it is, that Christ has already faced it for you.

Because he's faced that ultimate lion's den, you can trust him for tomorrow. Did you know that? You can trust God.

[31 : 39] No matter what you're going through, he's going to take care of you. If you walk with him and follow him, he's going to take care of you. That's the message of Daniel, that God is in control, and he's good, and he knows everything that you're facing, and he's there with you, and that you're not facing it alone.

And the question we have to ask as a church is will we trust him? Will you trust him? I hate saying things, this is what I want you to do, because it seems like a legalistic sermon, but I do want to share three things that have helped me in this journey.

The first thing is this, before you go to bed this week, before you finish off this week, find somebody else in your office place. Find somebody else who knows the Lord, they're in the lion's den, and share with them what's going on in your life.

Commit to this week to pray with that person for what's going on. Now, they might not be in your office. You know, one of my closest friends, one of my first Japanese friends, we were talking one day, he was an exchange student with me at college.

He was in a university of 40,000 students. As far as he could tell, he was the only Christian. He had sent out advertisements, and in the bulletins, and stops, hey, let's get together, Christian wants to pray, just pray for our campus.

[33 : 02] For four years, no other Christians came forward. And so he had to go outside of his university and find people who were like-minded, and they prayed together for the university. Maybe you have to do that at your work.

But I would just challenge you, before this week is over, find somebody and share with them and pray for them, and have them pray for you. The second thing that's helped me, before you start your day, just sit at your desk, or wherever you're at, for three minutes.

Now, if I don't do it at the beginning, I get so crazy busy with kids and everything else, I forget sometimes. But do it at the beginning, and just say, God, why do you have me here?

How can I glorify you today? God, will you show me someone who needs to hear this message?

The third thing. When you came in, there's a little orange booklet, Four Spiritual Laws, on your chair. I put it there because it's the tool that somebody used to help me see Christ.

[34 : 10] It's just a tool. It's not, it's not, you know, anointed by God. It's just a tool. It's an outline of Four Spiritual Laws. I want to challenge you just to take that with you and put it in your desk at work.

Because I believe that if you live differently, like what Daniel's talking about, people are going to come to you. And they're going to ask you why you're so different.

And this little booklet is just a great little tool that you could share with them. Don't go, read this, and you'll find out. They'll go, hey, can I share with you something that someone shared with me? Pray, find other community, trust the Lord, and know that he's in control.

And you can go on. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your goodness and your faithfulness and your mercy in our life. Father, I just pray for us right now. I know that there are probably people here, I have no doubt, there are people here who are trusting in other things.

They're serving other things. And they're expecting these things to sustain their souls. And Lord, I pray for my brothers and sisters who are at that place in their journey.

[35 : 21] I pray that you would give them the courage to talk to somebody today in this church. I pray that you give them the courage to ask the people who brought them or the friends that they know are believers.

I pray that they would ask, what is this hope? What is this thing that you're trusting in? What is this thing that helps you go through the fire? What is this thing that helps you go through the lion's den? And Lord, I pray that you would open their eyes so they would see your son. Because we know that we are, just like everyone else, hostile to those, with those values until you open our eyes.

And Lord, I pray for the rest of us here who have been on this journey for a while. I just confess so sorry that sometimes we use you instead of worshiping you.

I'm so humble that you are the God of second chances, that you know that you pour grace out into our life, that you don't give up on us, you continue to pursue us, and you pursue us, and you pursue us, and sometimes you take us into these dens and these fires because you want us to open our eyes to who your son is.

[36 : 38] But sometimes you just do it because you want us to show and see your glory. So Lord, I pray for us as a church that we would be people who love you, that we would trust you, that we wouldn't change and act differently around people who don't understand the gospel, that our words and our actions would be sweet and salty, that they would be attractive but also challenging because people in this world need to be challenged, and that's why you've left us here as your people.

So Lord, I pray for this church, I pray for this love offering, I pray for all the tithe that continually comes in. It's all yours. May we be good stewards of everything that you've given us and help we continue to point everyone to your son.

Father, we love you and we need you and we pray these things in your son Jesus' holy name.
Amen.