



At some point in 2023, life will feel like it's closing in on you, whether it's job pressure, family tension, or a host of other issues. The book of Daniel chronicles how Daniel responded when life closed in around him. Today we'll see him demonstrate a commitment we need to make for ourselves when life seems overwhelming: "I Will Trust God for What I Need."

SCRIPTURE: Daniel 2

#### GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What encouraged you, challenged you, or stood out the most to you from the sermon?
2. Read Daniel 2:1-6; 12-18. When faced with a dilemma, where did King Nebuchadnezzar turn for help? How did he respond when his advisors proved unhelpful? Where did Daniel turn for help? Are you more likely to react like King Nebuchadnezzar or Daniel when facing a troubling dilemma?

When faced with a troubling dream, King Nebuchadnezzar turned to his usual suspects: magicians, enchanters, sorcerers, and the Chaldeans. The king is so troubled by his dream that he quickly offers gifts and rewards for those who can help him make sense of it, and if they can't, he threatens to tear their limbs off.

On the other hand, when Daniel finds out that King Nebuchadnezzar has decided to kill all of the "advisers" for their lack of help, Daniel replies "with prudence and discretion" and then gathers his friends to seek God's help in prayer. Throughout the book of Daniel, we see how quickly King Nebuchadnezzar can become emotionally unhinged, and we continue to see Daniel's faith led him to respond to troubling dilemmas "with prudence and discretion." In today's text, we see Daniel turn quickly to prayer. How quickly do we make prayer the priority in our lives when life closes in on us? Is prayer our first resort or the last?

3. What does James 1:2-4, 12 teach us about the times when life seems to be closing in on us? What does it look like to trust God for what you need? Has there been a time when you found yourself in a situation like Daniel's, and you chose to "act in faith and rely on the Lord"? How did that experience shape the way you view God's ability to provide for your future needs?

James 1:2-4, "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, <sup>3</sup>for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. <sup>4</sup>And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

James 1:12, "Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him."

In chapter 2, Daniel shows us what it looks like to trust God. He acted in faith by responding with prudence and discretion rather than becoming emotionally unhinged because of his circumstances. Daniel was able to respond in faith with prudence because he was a man of prayer. Daniel didn't just turn to prayer in times of crisis; as we'll see throughout our study in the coming weeks, prayer was a regular part of his daily spiritual life, so when a crisis showed up, he was able to respond with spiritual maturity and great faith.

4. What do you think might happen if you walked into each day reminding yourself, "God can do things that I cannot do"? Would your prayers be any different? Would you worry about the same things? Would it change the way you interact with your family or co-workers?
5. Read Daniel 2:19-23. After a time of prayer, God revealed the meaning of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel. How does Daniel respond to God's provision? What might Daniel have been tempted to do instead? When God answers your prayers, are you more likely to respond as Daniel did, or are you more likely to quickly move forward in your life?

After a time of prayer, God revealed the mystery of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream to Daniel. Daniel responds by rejoicing and praising God for his wisdom, might, sovereignty, etc. He specifically thanks God for making "known to me what we asked of you" (v23). After this time of praise, Daniel meets with the king at the appointed time. If Daniel were like most people, he would likely have immediately rushed off to meet with the king, but Daniel first stopped to praise God. How quickly we move past praise and rush on with life when God answers prayer and solves a problem.

6. When Daniel heard about the king's rage, he asked his friends to pray. Why are we sometimes reluctant to share real prayer needs with others? What do we miss when we keep our prayer needs to ourselves? How can we make intentional prayer a more meaningful part of our small group experience?
7. Read Daniel 2:46-49. How should these final verses of chapter 2 inspire us when we face various trials?

These final few verses demonstrate quite the turn of events, wouldn't you say? Daniel goes from nearly being killed to being elevated to the ruler over the whole province of Babylon. Furthermore, Daniel's buddies are raised and appointed over the affairs of Babylon. Then there's King Nebuchadnezzar – a man who previously worshipped false gods and is now declaring that there is one True God, the God of Daniel. This turn of events doesn't represent a conversion experience for the king, but it's quite the change nonetheless. We see that God can do more in a moment than we can in a lifetime. God can do anything with anyone at any time. Do you believe this to be true? Do you act like it when life begins to close in on you?