



SESSION SNAPSHOT

THE ROUTINE THAT WILL CHANGE YOUR LIFE

NARRATIVE PASSAGE:

Daniel 6:10-24

GOSPEL FOCUS:

Mark 1:35

TAKEAWAYS:

- Develop a routine to meet regularly with God
- The rhythms that we establish early will be easier to continue as we practice them.

LAST WEEK'S READING:

- Daniel 5-6
- Daniel 9-10; 12
- Ezra 1-2
- Ezra 3-4
- Ezra 5-6

KNOW THE WORD

PASSAGE OVERVIEW

Daniel and his friends had already experienced some adversity in Babylon, but the most famous one in the book was still to come. Today's passage sets the scene for what led Daniel to be thrown into the lion's den, and it shows us something important about him: his faithfulness didn't start when the challenge came. It was a lifelong pattern that he practiced regularly.

COMMENTARY AND STUDY MATERIALS

v.10 Here, we see that Daniel had to make a decision. He had to decide where his loyalties lay. He understood that he was the subject of an earthly king and had been obedient to his reign, but his ultimate loyalty was to his relationship with God. This was going to turn out to be risky.

What we need to notice here is that praying and spending time with God was his usual custom. People knew that he did it, even though he didn't flaunt it. They knew where to find him if they were to look for him.

Even more than this, his daily habit was about to prove dangerous--but there was danger no matter which decision he made. He would have been compromising whether he obeyed the king's decree or not; he simply decided that if he had to sacrifice something, his relationship with the king was less important than his relationship with his Creator.

v.20 It is interesting to note that Darius had faith, but that his faith was likely born out of observing Daniel and the trust that he had in the Lord. Darius' words were communicating the idea that he had done what he could to save him, but now Daniel's faith was the only thing left to save him.

By pointing out that Daniel serves this God continually, Darius was noting Daniel's testimony. The way we live in private is being noticed by the people around us--especially the people who see us respond to difficult situations.

v.22 We aren't sure whether or not Daniel saw an actual angel in the den with him, but Daniel was quick to point out that his survival was not something that he did, it was something that God did. Whether or not Daniel saw someone with him in the pit, he felt the presence of the One who would keep him safe.

STUDY THE WORD

For some people, having a routine is crucial. They feel a strong need to do the same things at the same time every day, to practice the same rhythm—or else they feel out of control and scattered. Others feel most at home flying by the seat of their pants, taking on new things as they come—or else they feel trapped.

Which do you prefer—routine or flexibility? Why?

Do you have any patterns, rhythms, or routines in your day that you feel lost without?

Daniel was a man who lived by a consistent pattern, and it was so well known to the people around him that some people who were jealous of him used it against him. Three times a day, every day of the week, Daniel would go into his house, open a window, and pray. They passed a law that said anyone found praying to anyone except the King would be thrown into the lion's den, knowing Daniel would be found guilty almost immediately.

OUT LOUD, READ DANIEL 6:10-24

As you read, notice that the men wanting to arrest Daniel knew where he was going to be. He was so set in his routine and people knew that he was going to be meeting with God that they knew immediately where to find him.

Before today's passage, in verse 3, we learn that Daniel had earned the king's favor because of his "extraordinary spirit"—and this made the administrators mad.

Have you ever known someone with an "extraordinary spirit"?

What kinds of qualities did they have?

What was it like being around them?

Why do you think Daniel's attitude made him a target for people who were jealous of him?

For as long as people have been recording history, we've been fascinated with watching good men and women fall. But Daniel's "extraordinary spirit" was not self-righteousness or his own personal perfection; he had simply devoted his life to following God's commands, and the administrators who wanted to take him down knew it. They used God's Law as the specific angle they would attack him from (see verse 5).

What kind of reaction do people still have toward people who live according to God's commands?

Why do you think living a godly life is offensive to some people?

People are naturally inclined toward self-gratification and boosting themselves up. Sometimes this means they're okay with pushing others down. Whatever the case, living a godly life means denying our own desires and submitting, instead, to the Lord. We must be committed to living such a life every day—continually being renewed through God's Word.

Daniel had a specific rhythm that helped him get alone with God. What are some practices and rhythms that help you create space to enjoy God's company?

How did Daniel's pattern of life prepare him for what was to come?

Daniel's devotion never wavered, even when he was under attack. When it came time for his faith to be tested, he didn't have to do anything other than what he always did. He didn't have to prepare a new pattern of life or make any decision at all when the heat got turned up, because his eyes were off of his circumstances and were, instead, on the Lord.

Have you ever encountered a challenge that you felt prepared for before it arrived?

What are some things that hinder us from preparing for obstacles beforehand--whether they are spiritual obstacles, life circumstances, or physical ones?

Preparation beforehand for unforeseen challenges means practicing and demonstrating discipline. For some, this might feel overwhelming. Being ready for something you don't know is coming is difficult. But you don't have to begin with big steps. You can build discipline by focusing on little things first.

What are some tips you have for building a more disciplined life, whether it is financially, physically, or spiritually?

How do you think that being spiritually disciplined will affect the other areas of your life?

APPLY THE WORD

Starting to be spiritually disciplined might feel like a big step for you, but that's okay. You don't have to have everything together right away. You can start small: waking up five minutes before you need to and spending time in silence with the Lord. Maybe you need to work on a routine for reading or memorizing Scripture. Whatever place you feel like you can start, even if it is small, is probably the most perfect place for you.

Before you close your time in prayer, encourage those in your group to take a few minutes when you are done to answer the following and share updates next week:

Think about your own schedule every day. Where do you have some time you can spend getting alone with the Lord?

What positive effects do you think this one change will have in your day-to-day life?

PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK

Next Week's Reading:

- ***Zechariah 1:1-6; 2; 12***
- ***Ezra 7-8***
- ***Ezra 9-10***
- ***Esther 1-2***