

RTM

reaching/teaching/ministering curriculum

November 23, 2008
Faithful to Pray
Daniel 6



This week, we welcome Jeff French to the RTM Curriculum writing team. Starting this week, Jeff French will be writing the commentary portion of the lesson. Pray for Jeff as he writes...

MINISTERING HELPS

Group Prayer

This next Thursday is Thanksgiving. Why not make today's prayer time a prayer time related to what everyone is thankful for. We are always asking God for things as a group... are we thanking Him as a group also?

Stay Connected

The next 6 weeks is a time of the year where people's attendance gets very hit and miss because of the holidays. This is a crucial time to make sure that every absentee gets a call, card or e-mail letting them know they were missed. If your group is faithful to do this, you will not be as susceptible to lose group members in January, after schedules get back to normal.

REACHING HELPS

One of our biggest ways to reach adults with the message of Jesus is coming up in just a few weeks.

Christmas Celebration is FBC Allen's Musical Christmas Card to our community. This two hour musical extravaganza begins with an hour of seasonal upbeat Christmas music. The second hour is a costumed presentation of the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, helping folks to understand His ultimate mission... making possible the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

The presentations will be at 7 p.m. on December 12, 13, and 14; and this year, we will have a matinee presentation at 3 p.m. on December 14th.

This is a GREAT outreach event, if we will make the effort to invite the unchurched and unbelievers. You must have a ticket, but tickets are FREE and can be picked up in the foyer or at the church office.

TEACHING HELPS

Jimmy Smith will be continuing our preaching on PRAYER with the sermon **PRAYERS THAT REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**

Praying made a difference for Daniel. Not only his circumstances but the truth is, his faithfulness to pray made him different in a way where "people saw his good works and glorified his (Daniel's) father in heaven" (Matt 5:16).

Let the story of Daniel be a story that inspires your group members to be faithful to pray.



Faithful to Pray

Daniel 6



Four months ago, I was given a two-month pass to a local fitness club by my employer as a promo for the club. I was eager to get started but knew that the road to personal fitness was an uphill battle. My first morning started with ease, light weight training, 15 minutes of swimming, and 15 minutes of jogging. The second morning was not as exciting, but was nevertheless productive. I worked my lower body muscles and swam and jogged. Day three was awful. I woke up and could hardly walk. Heralding my work ethic, I limped into the gym, belly flopped into the pool and pretended to swim for 20 minutes - it was more wall clinging than swimming. Day four was a little better than day three. I noticed that if I worked the muscles most sore, they would loosen to a tolerable level. Day five was a little better than day four; and although my muscles still ached, I was able to move around with only fair discomfort. Day by day I began to increase strength and stamina. By week three, I began swimming for 30 minutes three times a week; and during week four, I began to run 5k three times a week. The end of week four brought new challenges: my pants were beginning to sag, there was a tone-ness to my arms and legs, and I could run over a mile without doubling over in exhaustion. This exercise thing was working for me! I had more energy throughout the day, I was watching what I ate, and I was checking things off the “honey do list” with more frequency. Exercise was impacting me.

Not only was I self-identifying with my exercise habits, others around me began noticing. My wife noticed the physical change; but more importantly, she was able to expand the “honey do list.” The guys playing pick-up basketball and football on the weekends were impressed with my stamina; and even my dogs loved the new me because they were being walked regularly.

Faithful exercise impacted me and those around me positively. Was it hard work? In the beginning, absolutely; but after a short period of time, it was rewarding, enjoyable, even anticipated. Prayer is much the same. When we are *FAITHFUL TO PRAY*, we begin to see the rewards of our prayers, our relationship with God is made fresh, and we anticipate the time we can spend with Him. The story of Daniel reveals that those who are *FAITHFUL TO PRAY* are faithful to receive God’s blessing in their own life and in the lives of those around them.

Context of this week’s passage: Daniel means “God is my judge.” He was among the first royalty¹ taken away during the Babylonian captivity, 605 B.C. Daniel was a contemporary of Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Zerubbabel. He quickly rose to a prominent position within the Empire because of his character and commitment to Yahweh.

Teaching Points

Introduction...

1. Ask your group to discuss the benefits of exercise with the following questions...
 - What are different ways that people choose to exercise? Why would one person choose to join a fitness club, while another would just run through the neighborhood?
 - When is it easy to exercise? When is it harder to exercise?
 - What are the benefits to regular exercise? How are others positively affected by your choice to exercise?
2. How is prayer like exercise? What are the benefits? Is there any downside? How are you benefitted by being faithful in prayer? How are others benefitted when you are faithful in prayer?

Maybe one of the all time heroes of prayer could be Daniel. He was faithful to pray, and because of it not only was he impacted, but so were many others. Let’s see what we can learn today about prayer from Daniel chapter 6.

¹ Daniel 1:3

(Daniel 1:8-17) God also gave Daniel the gift of Prophecy. Chapter 6 accounts Daniel's rapid rise to power, the threat it posed to his peers, and ultimately to his own life. More importantly, this chapter reveals the means to Daniels character that lead him to his power. **Daniel was not just a good man because of his prayers; His prayers became the basis for his extra-ordinary life.**

1. Prayer impacts me (v1-5)

¹ It pleased Darius to appoint 120 satraps to rule throughout the kingdom, ² with three administrators over them, one of whom was Daniel. The satraps were made accountable to them so that the king might not suffer loss. ³ Now Daniel so distinguished himself among the administrators and the satraps by his exceptional qualities that the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. ⁴ At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. ⁵ Finally these men said, "We will never find any basis for charges against this man Daniel unless it has something to do with the law of his God."

Daniel 6:1-5 (NIV)

To establish himself and his rule over the territory formerly ruled by Babylon, Darius appointed 120 satraps, each responsible for a certain geographical region. The king's major concern was corruption. He knew that political power afforded the opportunity not only for oppression but also for corruption. Therefore, the king appointed three governors over the 120 satraps. He wanted to create a system of accountability which would prevent him from suffering loss.

Daniel's rise to power did not rest on his accomplishments of the past. In fact, according to verse 3, Daniel was picked among the 120 as his talents were discovered. Although by this time Daniel had been a Prime Minister for over sixty years, God gave Daniel favor in the sight of Darius. Darius quickly realized Daniel's character. The word *so* in verse 3 gives insight into Daniel's ability to rule. Daniel's testimony is so awesome, his character and ability so great that not even his enemies can bring a charge against him. His flawless faithfulness to the king and his obedience to the laws of the land force his enemies to pass a new law aimed directly at him and his destruction. The only fault to be found with Daniel is that he is too godly.

1. Prayer impacts me... (v1-5)

1. Have someone read all of Daniel chapter 6. (sometimes it helps by having several people read 5 verses each when you have a long passage like this)
2. What kind of citizen and public servant was Daniel? How high had he gotten in government service? What does it say about Daniel's work ethic and the kind of person he was?
3. Do you think that he agreed with everything Darius believed in? Do you think they had the same spiritual goals and morals? What does it say to us in how we need to be responding in our current political times?

4. Why were Daniel's co-workers conspiring against him? How did they first try to disqualify him? (his conduct) What did they find?

What was the next thing they looked for? (corruption) What did they find here?

Where did the co-workers decide was the only place Daniel didn't line up with Darius? (his faith in God)

4. Look down to verse 10. What does it say Daniel was in the habit of doing? Do you think Daniel's great character led to his choosing to pray, or do you think his prayers led to his great character? Does this matter?

When we come to God, we are messed up. We don't pray because we have it all together, we pray because we don't. Real and faithful praying will change us from a character that is messed up, to a character like Daniel had.

Prayer changed Daniel.

How did Daniel establish this type of testimony? Daniel was *FAITHFUL TO PRAY*. The source of Daniel's character is rooted in his prayer life. Dan 6:10b *"Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before."*

5. What does FAITHFUL TO PRAY mean? Use the commentary to point out that it means we are to pray...

- often...
- dependent on God...
- thankfully...
- as a habit...

There are several important aspects to this statement that explain the impact prayer had on Daniel. First, Daniel prayed often, three times daily. Does it matter how often we pray? Absolutely, we are told to "pray without ceasing,"² Christ tells us "men are always to pray,"³ and Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1 exemplifies this aspect of prayer when he says, "We pray always for you." *FAITHFUL TO PRAY* means often in prayer.

Second, Daniel prayed dependently, humbling himself on his knees before his God. Throughout scripture kneeling often signifies dependent humility. Daniel understood his source of ALL. Christ kneeled as He prayed in the garden. Solomon consecrated the temple on his knees before God. Paul "gets on his knees" as he prays in Ephesians 3. *FAITHFUL TO PRAY* means dependent in prayer.

Third, Daniel prayed specifically, thanking God. One might think Daniel could do this with ease, living the lifestyle of a wealthy politician; however, Daniel was away from his family, his culture, and most importantly his "promise land." I'm certain Daniel would have traded places to be back in Israel, yet Daniel focused on God's never-ending blessings within each supplication. This is true in the New Testament: prayer and thanksgiving are one.⁴ *FAITHFUL TO PRAY* means thankful in prayer.

Last, Daniel prayed habitually, just as he had done before. Daniel habitually prayed ... on his knees ... three times a day ... out of a thankful spirit. This was part of Daniel's day, making it part of Daniel. It would be safe to say that Daniel consumed himself with prayer. Jesus made a habit of praying,⁵ and David's frequent prayers are seen throughout his Psalms. *FAITHFUL TO PRAY* means it was his habit.

Because Daniel was *FAITHFUL TO PRAY*, he was empowered to an extraordinary position, in an extraordinary situation, for an extra-ordinary opportunity to glorify God. Prayer impacted Daniel!

2. Prayer impacts others (v6-28)

⁶ So the administrators and the satraps went as a group to the king and said: "O King Darius, live forever!" ⁷ The royal administrators, prefects, satraps, advisers and governors have all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, O king, shall be thrown into the lions' den. ⁸ Now, O king, issue the decree and put it in writing so that it cannot be altered--in accordance with the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." ⁹ So King Darius put the decree in writing. ¹⁰ Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. ¹¹ Then these men went as a group and found Daniel praying and asking God for help. ¹² So they went to the king and spoke to him about his royal decree: "Did you not publish a decree that during the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or man except to you, O king, would be thrown into the lions' den?" The king answered, "The decree stands--in accordance with

² 1 Thes. 5:17

³ Luke 18:1

⁴ Col. 4:2; Phil. 4:6; 2 Cor. 9:11-15

⁵ Luke 6:12; Matt 14:23; Luke 9:18; Mark 1:35

the laws of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be repealed." ¹³ Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day." ¹⁴ When the king heard this, he was greatly distressed; he was determined to rescue Daniel and made every effort until sundown to save him. ¹⁵ Then the men went as a group to the king and said to him, "Remember, O king, that according to the law of the Medes and Persians no decree or edict that the king issues can be changed." ¹⁶ So the king gave the order, and they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions' den. The king said to Daniel, "May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!" ¹⁷ A stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles, so that Daniel's situation might not be changed. ¹⁸ Then the king returned to his palace and spent the night without eating and without any entertainment being brought to him. And he could not sleep. ¹⁹ At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions' den. ²⁰ When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to rescue you from the lions?" ²¹ Daniel answered, "O king, live forever! ²² My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, O king." ²³ The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God. ²⁴ At the king's command, the men who had falsely accused Daniel were brought in and thrown into the lions' den, along with their wives and children. And before they reached the floor of the den, the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones. ²⁵ Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language throughout the land: "May you prosper greatly! ²⁶ I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. "For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end. ²⁷ He rescues and he saves; he performs signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth. He has rescued Daniel from the power of the lions." ²⁸ So Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus the Persian. **Daniel 6:6-28 (NIV)**

2. Prayer impacts others... (v6-28)

Using the commentary, discuss how Daniel's faithfulness to pray impacted...

- King Darius - Who is a King Darius in your life who could be impacted through your faithfulness to pray?
- his adversaries - Who is "hating" on you and how might your faithfulness to pray impact them?
- his nation - Could your prayer life really have an effect on our city... state... nation... world? How so? Do you know of any examples?
- God - Ever thought that your faithfulness to pray has an impact on the God of the universe? How do you feel when a little child crawls in your lap? Could that be one way God is impacted? If the little child asks for help with something he can't reach or get for herself, what would you do? Could that be one way God is impacted? What are other examples?

Knowing Daniel's character, the only way to defame him would be to find fault in his god. Therefore, the men came together and created a way to get rid of Daniel. Unanimously (obviously without asking Daniel) his adversaries press the king, "the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or man during the next thirty days, except to you, the king, will be thrown into the lions' den." By requiring all men to make their petitions to Darius, they would acknowledge him as the source of their every blessing not Yahweh which was specific to Daniel's prayer.⁶ Honored, that he would be so revered, Darius makes the decree law.

⁶ The difference between Nebuchadnezzar's plan in chapter 3 and this plan in chapter 6 is that this was not Darius' idea.

Daniel, knowing the decree had been made, remains *FAITHFUL TO PRAY*; and you know the rest of the story. Daniel is entrapped by his advisors, taken to the king, and found guilty of praying to Yahweh for blessing. He is thrown into the lions' den where once again he is found praying. After a restless night, the king arrives early at the den, pries the stone away, and much to his surprise finds Daniel alive, well, and praising Yahweh.

The king's response is immediate and authoritative: replace Daniel with his accusers and their families. While the lions could not harm Daniel, they performed as expected with anyone else. God not only delivered Daniel from his enemies, He also delivered his enemies to the judgment they deserved for oppressing His people. Darius then decrees, "all are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel." What greater way for God to be glorified than Daniels STORY spreading throughout the land about the faithfulness of Yahweh.

Daniel's *FAITHFULNESS TO PRAY* not only impacted his own life, but the lives of all those around him.

- Daniel's *FAITHFULNESS TO PRAY* impacted Darius. Darius now understood who Yahweh is, what He is capable of, and that He is in control. Darius was taken on an emotional roller coaster, ultimately for God to be glorified through Darius by the actions of Daniel. Prayer changes individuals.⁷
- Daniel's *FAITHFULNESS TO PRAY* impacted his adversaries. Their impact was much less spiritual although the message to others was clear. Daniel is a great story of how God is able to avenge the innocent. We never learn if Daniel prays like David, Solomon, or other Prophets. We do know, however, that his prayers were rooted in thanksgiving and that God not only vindicated him, but also avenged him. Prayer changes our adversaries.⁸
- Daniel's *FAITHFULNESS TO PRAY* impacted nations. Darius' decree acknowledges the God of Daniel as sovereign. God is a far greater king than he, and God's kingdom is much greater than his earthly kingdom. Yahweh is the One to whom men should rightly address their petitions. Since God had done what the king could not do in delivering Daniel, God is the One whom men should worship and the One to whom their petitions in prayer should be made. Daniel's testimony impacted nations. Prayer changes nations.⁹
- Daniel's *FAITHFULNESS TO PRAY* impacted God. Ultimately God is/was glorified through Daniel's prayer life. Your prayer life matters to God because it has direct impact on His glory.

Application Ideas...

Challenge your class to make a vow to God and spend at least 15 minutes each day in prayer for the next 7 days.

Remember, some of your group may feel like that is forever because they are not used to doing it. Help them by encouraging them to use the following format as a prayer guide...

Spend time in each of the following categories talking to God...

A- Adoring God, telling Him you love Him, sing Him a song of praise...

C- Confess your sins to Him, think back over actions and attitudes that were sinful, admit things that you did that you shouldn't have, and things you didn't do that you should have...

T- Thank God, list all the wonderful things you are thankful for, thank Him for the tough things that are helping you learn to trust Him also...

S- Supplying the needs of others and your needs, pray for others you know who are sick, pray for the lost you know, pray for the backslidden people you know, pray for your physical, spiritual and emotional needs.

⁷ 2 Samuel 12:22-23; 2 Corinthians 12:8-9; Judges 6:36-40

⁸ 1 Kings 18:24-39; Gal. 1:8-9

⁹ 1 Timothy 2:1-2; 2 Chronicles 30:18; Zechariah 8:20-23

Although God does not need man to reveal His glory, He delights in opportunities to use those who seek Him faithfully. Prayer impacts God.

How did Daniel become and overcome? He was *FAITHFUL TO PRAY*. Prayer is powerful because when we habitually align ourselves with God, **ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE**.

Prayer: May our prayers create opportunities for God to be glorified in all and through all.